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THE LITERARY HISTORY OF ENGLAND

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IN THE END OF THE EIGHTEENTH AND BEGINNING OF THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

BY MRS. OLIPHANT

AUTHOR OF 'MAKERS OF FLORENCE,' ETC.

"Reading maketh a full man."—BACON, *On Study.*
"A good book is the precious life-blood of a master spirit embalmed and treasured up on purpose to a life beyond life."—MILTON, *Areopagitica.*
"Je ne voyage sans livres, ny en paix, ny en guerre. C'est la meilleure munition que j'aye trouvé à cet humain voyage."—MONTAIGNE, Livre iii. Chap. iii.
"Books are the legacies that a great genius leaves to mankind."—ADDISON, *Spectator.*

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THE LITERARY HISTORY OF ENGLAND.

CHAPTER I.

CHARLES LAMB — THOMAS DE QUINCEY.

AMID the greater forms that rose in the new flood of genius and life, in the end of the old century, to give the world assurance of a new epoch coming in, there is no attendant figure more attractive, more delightful, than that of Charles Lamb. No face can frown, no brow be overcast, when Elia—the gentle, the tender, the humorous, and ever-smiling, notwithstanding the deep dew of anguish which was never quite dried in his eyes—makes his appearance upon the scene. No man ever had a sweeter or more lightsome nature, and few men, even in this world of trouble, have been so heavily weighted. He was the schoolfellow of Coleridge at Christ's Hospital, and it is enough to warm the heart of all beholders to every wearer of the blue gown and yellow stockings to remember the two lads, who once strayed about the narrow streets in these habiliments, and ate the poor fare and bore the hardships which, in these days, were inseparable from the lot of a Blue-coat boy. Coleridge was a Grecian, a scholar, and credit to the school, although

he prized the position so little that he desired (as is recorded) to be bound apprentice to a kind cobbler, who had been good to him, instead of going to college; but Lamb had no such distinctions, and instead of accompanying his schoolfellow to Cambridge, entered the South Sea Office at fifteen, the little salary he received there being of importance to his family. When he was eighteen, he was received into the India Office, and there spent his life. His father was no more than the servant of Mr. Salt, a bencher in the Inner Temple, and the little household was in the humblest circumstances, though of that class so common in books, so little common in reality—nature's gentlefolks. "It is hard," says De Quincey, with a grace of natural perception which makes his gossip and his tone of involuntary depreciation supportable, "it is hard, even for the practical philosopher, to distinguish aristocratic graces of manner and capacities of natural feeling in people whose very hearth and dress bear witness to the servile humility of their station. Yet such distinctions, as wild gifts of nature, timidly and half consciously asserted themselves in the unpretending Lambs. Already, in their favour there existed a silent privilege, analogous to the famous one of Lord Kinsale. He, by special grant from the Crown, is allowed, when standing before the king, to forget that he is not himself a king: the bearer of that peerage, through all generations, has the privilege of wearing his hat in the royal presence. By a general, though tacit, concession of the same nature, the rising generation of the Lambs, John and Charles

the sons, and Mary Lamb, the only daughter, were permitted to forget that their grandmother had been a housekeeper for sixty years, and that their father had worn a livery."

Lamb was so completely above all petty pride, that he himself refers to this housekeeper-relation in one of the most delightful of his essays. He had nothing to conceal from the world. His humble position, his family, his domestic concerns, leaped into the sight of all men in one brief and terrible moment, when the light-hearted youth was but twenty, a fanciful boy like others, writing sonnets to his mistress's eyebrow, and rhyming about a fairhaired maid. His father was old and feeble, his mother an invalid in her chair, and she who kept the little, dreary, sick household going, and cared for every one —Mary, ten years older than her brother—had always been the most tender of sisters and daughters. But there was insanity in their blood. Charles himself had spent "the six weeks that finished last year and began this" (1796) "very agreeably in a madhouse at Hoxton;" and Mary had suffered from more than one attack of the same kind. But nobody, it was evident, dreamt of any danger in connection with the gentle, homely young woman, the provider of her household, when one dreadful September day, when the cloth was laid for the midday dinner, a sudden fury of madness seized her, and with one of the knives from the table she killed the invalid mother whom she had been watching with unremitting tenderness night and day. "My poor, dear, dearest

sister," writes Lamb to Coleridge, with an agony of restrained tears in the very sound of the words, "in a fit of insanity has been the death of her own mother. I was at hand only time enough to snatch the knife out of her grasp. She is at present in a madhouse, from whence I hear she must be removed to an hospital. God has preserved to me my senses; I eat and drink, and sleep, and have my judgment, I believe. My poor father was slightly wounded, and I am left to take care of him and my aunt. . . . Write as religious a letter as possible," the poor young man continues, "but no mention of what is gone and done with. 'The former things have passed away,' and I have something more to do than to feel. God Almighty has us all in his keeping." What a tragedy was this to break into the monotonous routine of the little rooms in the city, where the old father, almost imbecile, the old aunt in not much better case, the mother helpless, were all dependent upon the care of that serene and loving Mary, who worked at her needlework to add to their comforts, and sacrificed her life and her rest to them, till this final blast of madness came. "My dear, dearest sister!" Lamb repeats again and again, his profound, heartrending pity for her—"the unhappy and unconscious instrument of the Almighty's judgments on our house," —transcending every other feeling. Anxious calculations how to spare enough money to keep her in the asylum, where she had been taken, were the first efforts of his mind after this horrible shock; "If my father, an old servant maid, and I, can't live, and live com-

fortably, on £130 or £120 a year, we ought to burn by slow fires; and I almost would that Mary might not go into a hospital." Poor boy! he who made these calculations, and supplied the greater part of the tiny income, was but twenty; and in the midst of all these terrible troubles could not help a half sob of boyish misery, when he described himself as "starving at the India House since seven o'clock without any dinner," then getting home, "over worn and quite faint," to play cards with the sick and exacting old man, who was wholly dependent upon him for company and amusement: "I am got home at last," he writes, "and after repeated games at cribbage, have got my father's leave to write a while; with difficulty got it, for when I expostulated about playing any more, he aptly replied, 'If you won't play with me you might as well not come home at all.' The argument was unanswerable, and I set to afresh." In this gloomy scene, it was some consolation to him to recollect the nice "smoky little room at the Salutation" where Coleridge and he had been wont to meet. "I have never met with any one—nor shall meet with any one—who could or can compensate me for the loss of your society," he says; and so said everybody who had ever known Coleridge—that strange sympathetic genius which fathomed, and embraced, and understood, all the moods of men. It is one of the incidental testimonies which touch our hearts most, that in Lamb's terrible trouble he should have been able to pour out his heart, unreservedly, into the bosom of this friend of friends.

Some time after the poor old father died, and Charles was fain to do what he had been longing for —to take his sister back to his home. There were great doubts and difficulties about it. The well-to-do relations, and chiefly the elder brother, thought it better she should remain where she was, getting rid of the sight, at least, of this great and abiding distress by keeping her in seclusion. But young Charles had a heart of a different fibre. There were difficulties, too, with the law, which had a right over her; but he surmounted all objections, and "satisfied all persons who had power to oppose her release, by his solemn engagement that he would take her under his care for life." He was impatient, even, to take upon him this burden which the other sensible people opposed, although the fear that her malady might break out again, tempered the joy of getting his dear companion back. This fear was but too well grounded. Mary Lamb—"the dear, dearest sister" for whom his heart bled—came back to the tender shelter of her young brother's little rooms and great pitying love; but it was not long before she "fell ill" again. "I was obliged to remove her yesterday," he says; "my heart is quite sunk, and I don't know where to look for relief. Mary will get better, but her constantly being liable to such relapses is dreadful. I am completely shipwrecked." So this dismal-happy life began. For nearly forty years they lived together, with many a subdued and gentle interval of happiness "between the acts," in such complete and perfect understanding, love, and amity, as few married pairs attain, inspired by

the more delicate, more disinterested sentiment of fraternal devotion, which is, perhaps, the most exquisite and pure of all human loves. Mary, too, had something to bear in this long and tender union—her share of the burden, the woman's part, seeing her brother often do himself less than justice; for he was not perfect any more than happier men. But homely and poor as their life was at the best, and so often tragically interrupted, it would be wrong to say that it was an unhappy life. They went through the world together serenely and gaily, taking advantage of every gleam of sunshine, doing their duty as they could, in imperfection and heaviness, maintaining a brave front to fate. In the front row of the pit, among the bookstalls, in the streets which were familiar ground to them from their childhood, in their cheerful little rooms high up among the gables of the Temple, we see them always with a ray of genial light about them, sweet patience and gaiety, and humble, tender acquiescence in the inevitable. Of all the figures going about those streets, so many and with such varied features, there is no pair who so catch at our hearts. Tears come into our eyes while we listen to the puns and the jokes of "gentle-hearted Charles," and watch the ever expressive tender smile, not without an occasional shake of the head, with which the sister, for whom he had done so much, contemplates him. How poor are all the other people, taking their own way, indulging their own will, fighting hard against all the pinches of circumstance, to that beloved pair! Godwin, with his big head, philosophising, quarrelling,

wondering why this woman and that was so insensible as not to wish to marry him; pretty Mrs. Inchbald, holding her own in her garret, blooming triumphant in the poorest gown, and boasting truly of her economies and charities; in after times, even the self-willed passion of young Shelley and his Mary, defying law and every obstacle—romance and poetry if you please—how are they all a million times below the merest shadows on the pavement of that brother and sister!—"Lamb, the frolic and the gentle," Elia, the whimsical, the tender, whose every tear suggests a smile, and every laugh a tear. Never were there two people more dearly consecrated to humanity by love and misery, and sacred patience and pain.

The very affection with which we regard them is a reason why we can say but little about them. Their lives are not to be described, nor are the essays of Elia to be quoted. Every worthy reader has his little niche for them, separate and sacred. Talfourd, in his *Final Memorials*, gives us a touching inscription written by Coleridge against the title of a poem dedicated in his youth to those dear friends. It is the poem in which, from his "lime tree bower"—where he was confined by an accident while they were visiting him at Nether Stowey—he follows in imagination their breezy walk "on springy heath, along the hill-top edge," or threading the echoing dale among the woods, then emerging forth beneath wide heaven to see the brightness of the champaign lying before them, fields and meadows, and steepled villages, and the "smooth clear blue" of the sea—

"Yes, they wander on
In gladness all; and thou, methinks, most glad,
My gentle-hearted Charles; for thou hast pined
And hungered after nature many a year
In the great city pent, winning thy way
With sad yet patient soul through evil and pain,
And strange calamity."

Against this, long long after, Coleridge, in his shipwrecked and lonely shelter at Highgate, wrote the following inscription:—

Ch. and Mary Lamb,
dear to my heart, yea
as it were my heart.
S. T. C., Æt. 63, 1834.
1797.
1834.

37 years.

This little record, like a stone upon a grave—yet not a grave, a memorial and pledge of something never to die—expresses the very soul of veneration, pity, and tenderness which their names call forth—a pity which is almost remorse: for why should the rest of us pass through life so much more easily than they?

Lamb, the friend of Coleridge, and through him of all the poetical brotherhood, began his own literary life with a gentle strain of poetry, among which are some verses, well known by quotation, which have real melody as well as meaning. Such is "Hester," an address to a dead girl, which embodies that warm human incredulity as to death, which is one of the most strange yet most universal of sentiments, the

resistance of the immortal in us to the most heart-rending evidence of fact. She has been a month dead, yet no force can make him think of her and the grave together;

> "My sprightly neighbour, gone before
> To that unknown and silent shore!
> Shall we not meet as heretofore,
> Some summer morning:
>
> "When from thy cheerful eyes a ray
> Hath struck a bliss upon the day,
> A bliss that would not pass away,
> A sweet forewarning?"

But verse was not Lamb's method. He published a tragedy, "John Woodvil," which was massacred in the *Edinburgh Review* — not without reason: his friends themselves all deprecating the unlucky poem, and no one striking a blow for it. Later he tried a farce — "Mr. H——," which was accepted by the manager at Drury Lane, and acted; but failed. "Mary is a little cut at the ill success of Mr. H——," Lamb writes; "I know you'll be sorry—but never mind. We are determined not to be cast down. I am going to leave off tobacco, and then we must thrive. A smoking man must write smoky farces." . . . "We are pretty stout about it," he says to another correspondent; "have had plenty of condoling friends: but after all we had rather it had succeeded." These little failures, however—though the shock of the hisses ("Hang the word, I write it like kisses; how different!" he writes) must have had no small effect upon Lamb's nervous, sensitive, and love-loving

nature—were of small importance in his life. As soon as Elia stepped out into the world (in the pages of the *London Magazine*) his gentle immortality was secure. Never was there more delightful playing with life and all its mysteries and depths, more soft and laughing banter, more tender thoughtfulness. Especially when he spoke of himself, and his own restrained and subdued life, was Lamb exquisite; the "sort of double singleness" in which he and his sister lived, their harmony, their little differences, their diversified tastes, their mutual recollections — nothing could be more delicately set down; and when he rises into the fun of the roast pig, or expatiates with humorous tenderness upon "the innocent blacknesses," the poor little sweeps for whose hard lot no alleviation of machinery in the shape of long-jointed brushes had yet been thought of—or falls into the vein of delicate sentiment in which he discourses with his "dream children," there is no more delightful companion. Tragedy and farce alike might refuse him; but here was a path of his own not obtrusive, inviting but little the fancy of the multitude, where he was supreme. De Quincey talks of him as one of those authors who will be found to rest much of the interest which surrounds them upon their essential non-popularity. But we cannot consent that Elia is unpopular. His book has not only the delicate aroma which suits the most cultivated, but a something of native fragrance which appeals to the multitude as well.

There are many impatient readers who are not

capable of this kind of literature at all; who, indeed, are not to be called readers at all, but on the one side workmen in mines, out of which they mean to draw substantial advantage: or on the other like the easy audience of the Eastern story-teller—romance-devourers, seekers after excitement, if not in act and deed, in narrative and history, in something that thrills and tingles the blood with the keen vicissitudes of a rapid tale. But no true reader, wherever found, can fail to acknowledge the power of Elia. He is, in the best sense of the word, one who writes for writing's sake—not because he has much to tell us, but because it is a pleasure to him to make friends with us, to jest and sigh and trifle, to play some whimsical trick upon us, to transport us in a moment, all unwittingly, from laughter into weeping, to play upon all the strings of our hearts. Writing of this description is apt to be considered by the ignorant the easiest of all manner of literary composition. But it is not so; indeed, it is the most difficult of all, rejecting compulsory and prescribed subjects, and following its own sweet will and nothing else. Something of Addison is in Lamb; something of the Browns and Burtons in whom he delighted. He wanted no subject to discourse upon, nor would tolerate any bondage. He liked to wander where he would, to talk as he liked. He had his daily work of another description—folios to write, as he says, a whole library of them, which nobody read. And thus his literary work represented to him, not a life's toil, but the most exquisite diversion, a pleasant communion with minds unknown, and equally

pleasant agitation and agreeable excitement of possible controversy and discussion with the friends visible who would meet, and note, and criticise. It gave expression to all the higher aims of his life, and to the gentle genius not great enough for action, which yet was true genius in its way. He was, beside such amount of classic lore as came from his early-abandoned studies, a scholar in English: for there seems no reason why the word should not be applied to the student of our own wealthy literature as well as to any other. His *Specimens of English Dramatic Poets* was one of the first efforts made to revive the knowledge—sometimes, as contemporary critics declared, not much to edification in a moral point of view, but of great importance in that of poetry—of the lesser lights of the Shakspearian age; and shows the finest critical perception, as well as the most delicate poetical enthusiasm. Lamb was, in short, a man of native culture, differing as much from the Hazlitts and Holcrofts as night from day, though all his intellectual training had been accomplished at Christ's Hospital before he was fifteen. But there are men who are born with this fine quality—*educazione*, as the Italians say—an accomplished mind, as our grandfathers called it—whatever their external means of training may be.

Nothing beyond this happened to Lamb in his happy-melancholy life. He retired from his office after more than thirty years' service, on a pension, and thought himself blessed; but afterwards wearied, as so many men do, for the wholesome harsh routine

which had given a backbone to his life. And all through this long course of years the vicissitudes of his domestic existence continued the same. Periodically Mary "fell ill." That "Mary sends her love *from home*," that "Mary is well," is the key-note of his letters, put at the very beginning before any usual superscription. And when she felt the fit coming on, the two took their way from the recesses of the Temple out to the suburbs, in which her place of confinement was, he going with her to the dreadful door, she voluntarily putting herself into the prison. All this is so well known, that it seems a useless repetition to tell it here. Mary and he together, moved by a desire on her part to aid in the expenses of the little household, composed the *Tales from Shakspeare*, which have always kept their popularity; and Mary alone was the author of *Mrs. Leicester's School*. Thus, even literature was in common between them. But Mary had no hand, except as one of the subjects, in Elia. There she sits, Bridget Elia, by the fireside for ever, with that tender observer by her. "I for one," he says, "find in myself no sort of disposition to go out upon the mountains, like the rash king's offspring, to bewail my celibacy." The scene is softly silent: the low room hung round with dark Hogarth prints, far too harsh and pungent for such a kind interior; the fire flickering between them; he "hanging over, for the thousandth time, some passage in old Burton, or one of his strange contemporaries;" and she, on the other side, in quicker flow of interest, "abstracted in some modern tale or adventure,

whereof our common reading-table is daily fed with assiduously fresh supplies." The books that supplied this table in a constantly renewed stream — with old Burton slowly mused over in the other arm-chair, outlasting nearly a hundred—would be perhaps Mrs. Radcliffe's mysterious romances, or the gloomy pages of *Caleb Williams*, fresh from the press, or the *Simple Story*—books which we only come upon in obscure corners now, even of that "gentleman's library," which would not be complete without them. "Narrative teases me," he says, for to his eccentric humorous genius continuity is a trouble, and he loves to pause at any moment and follow out quaint associations and far-reaching links of fancy; but "she must have a story—well, ill, or indifferently told, so there be life stirring in it, and plenty of good or evil accidents." It has been her lot "to have had for her associates and mine free-thinkers, leaders and disciples of novel philosophies and systems; but she neither wrangles with nor accepts their opinions. That which was good and venerable to her when a child retains its authority over her mind still. She never juggles or plays tricks with her understanding. We are both of us inclined to be a little too positive, and I have observed the result of our disputes to be uniformly this—that in matters of fact, dates, and circumstances, it turns out that I was in the right, and my cousin in the wrong. But when we have differed on moral points, upon something proper to be done or let alone, whatever heat of opposition or steadiness of conviction I set out with, I am sure always in the long run to be brought over to her

way of thinking." But she has an awkward trick of reading in company, he adds, that his picture may not be without a tiny shadow; sometimes she will answer an irrelevant yes or no to a question; perhaps when she is in full tide of a story, will not pause to listen to some stammering witty comment, some quaint train of thought leading off from these old fields of letters through which he is meandering to lands unknown. One can see how this happens—not often, for her sympathy with him is boundless: but now and then, when perhaps Miss Milner's story is coming to a crisis, or Caleb about to denounce his persecutor. Where did they get this innate unquestionable refinement that goes against every tradition? Here is how Mary Lamb, or Bridget Elia, came by it. "She was tumbled early, by accident or design, into a spacious closet of good old English reading (no doubt in the great country house, where the grandmother was the housekeeper, and where, in all probability, none of the young ladies of the family were half so fortunate) without much selection or prohibition, and browsed at will upon that fair and wholesome pasturage. Had I twenty girls (cries Mary's brother) they should be brought up exactly in this fashion. I know not whether their chance in wedlock might not be diminished by it; but I can answer for it that it makes (if the worst comes to the worst) most incomparable old maids."

Thus they lived together, and kept each other happy—between the acts, as Lamb says. The acts were those terrible intervals when she was away in

the asylum and he alone. While they lived in the Temple, the best and happiest part of their lives, the brother and sister held little weekly assemblies, which Talfourd, their biographer, compares to the more splendid gatherings in Holland House. In the one, everything that was noble and imposing, almost royal—stately hospitality, guests honoured and proud to find themselves there; in the other, the homeliest friendly meeting, the fire playing cheerfully, lighting up the low dark walls; the whist-tables set out; the substantial, plain supper in the corner; "Lamb himself, yet unrelaxed by the glass, sitting with a sort of Quaker primness at the whist-table, the gentleness of his melancholy smile half lost in his intentness in the game." But when the moderate play was over, and the supper discussed, and "the hot water and its accompaniments" produced, the conversation became more animated. "Hazlitt, catching the influence of the spirit from which he has just begun to abstain, utters some fine criticism with struggling emphasis. Lamb stammers out puns, suggestive of wisdom, for happy Barron Field to admire and echo; the various driblets of talk combine into a stream, while Miss Lamb moves gently about to see that each modest stranger is duly served, turning now and then an anxious, loving eye on Charles, which is softened into a half-humorous expression of resignation to inevitable fate when he mixes his second tumbler." Sometimes Wordsworth would appear at rare intervals, and to hear him recite the noblest passages of his own poetry, and discuss its theories and power, drew the

little company together in rapt attention; while still more when Coleridge came, every other question was laid aside, "argument and humorous criticism were hushed;" and if a card-table had been filled, or a dispute begun before he was excited to continuous speech, his gentle voice, undulating in music, soon

> "Suspended whist, and took with ravishment
> The thronging audience."

There were other meetings too in which Elia was a conspicuous figure. Among them certain periodical assemblages at the *Courier* office, where, as we are told by a witness quoted by De Quincey, "Lamb said little except when an opening arose for a pun. And how effectual that sort of small shot was from him I need not say to anybody who remembers his infirmity of stammering, and his dexterous management of it for purposes of light and shade. He was often able to train the roll of stammers into settling upon the words immediately preceding the effective one, by which means the keynote of the jest, or sarcasm, benefiting by the sudden liberation of his embargoed voice, was delivered with the force of a pistol shot. That stammer was worth an annuity to him, as an ally of his wit." Many people will remember the same skill, used not as an ally of wit indeed, which he scarcely possessed, but as a picturesque peculiarity, enhancing the power of his rolling sentences, in the late Charles Kingsley. But Lamb's habitual talk consisted of those random shots of playful wit, odd suggestive outbursts, in which there was often something much deeper than met the

eye. "The mercurialities of Lamb were infinite," says De Quincey, "and always uttered in a spirit of absolute recklessness for the quality or the prosperity of the sally. It seemed to liberate his spirit from some burthen of blackest melancholy which oppressed it when he had thrown off a jest." But the intellectual talk which young De Quincey hoped for when he dined alone with the brother and sister, and was left with his host after dinner, did not come, and the disappointment gives occasion for a pretty bit of description, which brings before us, in an affecting and attractive picture, the worn and pensive aspect of "the man of mirth":—

"Over Lamb at this period of his life there passed regularly, after taking wine, a brief eclipse of sleep. It descended upon him as softly as a shadow. In a gross person, laden with superfluous flesh and sleeping heavily, this would have been disagreeable; but in Lamb, thin even to meagreness, spare and wiry as an Arab of the desert, or as Thomas Aquinas wasted by scholastic vigils, the affection of sleep seemed rather a network of aërial gossamer than of earthly cobweb, more like a golden haze falling upon him gently from the heavens than a cloud exhaling upwards from the flesh. Motionless in his chair as a bust, breathing so gently as scarce to seem alive, he presented the image of repose midway between life and death, like the repose of sculpture; and to one who knew his history, a repose affectingly contrasting with the calamities and internal storms of his life. I have heard more persons than I can now distinctly recall, observe of Lamb while sleeping that his countenance in that state assumed an expression almost seraphic, from its intellectual beauty of outline, its childlike simplicity, and its benignity."

The soft exhaustion of this sketch hushes and softens the conclusion of the story. Lamb died ten

years before his sister. The concluding chapters of his life are deeply sad, as the last chapter almost invariably is — more sad by far in the dejection of failing strength and ending hope than the harder struggle of mid life, with its keener pangs but counterbalancing enjoyments. Their suburban lodgings were not so cheerful or so congenial as the little chambers on the top story, in the beloved regions of the Temple. During the last year of his life, Lamb, unable to bear the constant separations, went to live with the people who took charge of his sister in her moments of illness, and so was able to remain with her even during that trial. He describes this pathetically in a letter to a friend :—

"I bear my privations very well. I am not in the depths of desolation as heretofore. It is no new thing for me to be left to my sister. When she is not violent, her rambling chat is better to me than the sense and vanity of this world. Her heart is obscured, not buried; it breaks out occasionally; and one can discern a strong mind struggling with the billows that have gone over it. I could be nowhere happier than under the same roof with her. Her memory is unnaturally strong; and from ages past, if so we may call the earliest records of our poor life, she fetches thousands of names and things that never would have dawned on me again, and thousands from the ten years she lived before me. For twelve hours incessantly she will pour out, without intermission, all her past life, forgetting nothing, pouring out name after name as in a dream. Sense and nonsense, truths and errors huddled together, a medley between inspiration and possession. What things we are! I know you will bear with me talking of these things. It seems to ease me, for I have nobody to tell these things to now."

He died the same year (1834), when poor Mary

was in one of her aberrations, happily for her. When she came to herself her constant evening pilgrimage was to his grave, till friends persuaded her to remove from the sad vicinity. She was, indeed, no longer able to care for herself, but lingered on, oftener mad than sane, till 1847, when she died a very old woman, and was delivered from all her troubles.

"Shortly before his death Lamb had borrowed of Mr. Cary, Phillips's *Theatrum Poetarum Anglicanorum*, which, when returned by Mr. Moxon after the event, was found with the leaf folded down at the account of Sir Philip Sydney. Its receipt was acknowledged by the following lines:—

"So should it be, my gentle friend;
Thy leaf last closed at Sydney's end.
Thou too, like Sydney, wouldst have given
The water, thirsting and near heaven;
Nay were it wine filled to the brim,
Thou hadst look'd hard, but given, like him.

"And art thou mingled then among
Those famous sons of ancient song?
And do they gather round, and praise
Thy relish of their nobler lays?
Waxing in mirth to hear thee tell
With what strange mortals thou didst dwell;
At thy quaint sallies more delighted,
Than any's long among them lighted!

"'Tis done; and thou hast joined a crew,
To whom thy soul was justly due;
And yet I think, where'er thou be,
They'll scarcely love thee more than we."

This flower thrown upon Lamb's grave was from

the hand of the first translator of Dante, a gentle soul not uncongenial with his own.

Before we leave the elder group of poets who formed the age, and to whose society Lamb's figure and name belong of right, though his poetic rank is low, we must take a step forward in chronology to include the strange little wanderer in "a world not realised," from whom we have repeatedly quoted—the delicate mind and warped nature, always wild, insubordinate, and deficient of all rule, yet exquisite in expression and fine in thought, of Thomas De Quincey. He who hung about the poets and their recollections all his life is likewise mingled in the web of their existence with almost inextricable closeness, and it would be unkind, even if it were not useless, to attempt to untwine him from the connection in which his best years and best feelings were engaged. When he left the Lakes and their associations he bent his steps northward to associate himself with one of the groups we have shortly to discuss, so that still his place is here though he stands lower in Time. He was the son of a Manchester merchant, born in a wealthy house, and with a fortune sufficient to keep him at least from being prematurely involved in the struggle for existence; but, wilful and fantastical being as he always was, he broke away from the restraining care of his guardians while he was still very young, and plunged, a strange philosophical musing little vagrant, still a boy in years, and not more than a child in appearance, into want and misery, and the London streets, opening up a curious dreamy vista into

dismal regions such as are seldom made plain to other eyes than those of their unfortunate denizens. After this he went to Oxford, with a truce patched up between him and those who had authority over him, and stayed long enough to go through some part of his examinations for his degree, with credit; but driven aside by some offence, or blown away by some caprice, left the place before his "schools" were over, and, like so many of his greater contemporaries, never took his degree. This was the more unfortunate that he too was a scholar by nature, with the strongest receptive powers, and ought to have been, but for that wayward mood in him, the ornament of a college. But the Universities in those days evidently had no power of attracting to them the first intelligences of the time.

While he was at Oxford he came under the influence of the *Lyrical Ballads*, and was moved with all the enthusiasm of a convert in the midst of opposition, for the new poetry, and the great new gods of it, whom most men blasphemed. His first connection with them was by means of correspondence with Wordsworth, who replied kindly to his youthful effusion of faith and worship; and De Quincey, it is said, travelled all the way to the Lake Country to make the poet's acquaintance; but, seized with sudden timidity, returned without daring to show himself. A few years later, being in the neighbourhood of Bristol, he went to Nether Stowey on a pilgrimage to see Coleridge, who had removed from that place long before, but was, as it chanced, not far off on

a visit. De Quincey, in the extremity of his devotion, followed him. "In riding down the main street of Bridgewater I noticed a gateway corresponding to the description given me. Under this was standing and gazing about him a man," the very "noticeable man, with large gray eyes," of whom he was in search. It was nothing out of the way to Coleridge that men should come riding out of the unknown in search of him, to hear him talk, and draw a little to refresh their souls out of his unfathomable wealth and life; and he received the pilgrim after the confusion of the first moment with generous hospitality. It is characteristic of De Quincey that he cannot give his account of this first meeting, which is delightful, without introducing "a lady whose face showed some prettiness of rather a commonplace order," and plunging into those secrets of domestic life with which the reader has no concern, be they true or false. This is his weakness throughout. His account of the great poets with whom he was permitted to live, often beautifully told in choice English and with graphic grace, is spoiled to the reader by disagreeable investigations below the surface of family life, and repetition of confidences which, if made to him at all, were certainly not made to be brought forth upon the house-tops. This early beginning of his intercourse with Coleridge had, however, a distinct memorial enough. After the delights of the first visit, in which, as soon as they had gone through the first preliminaries of acquaintance, "Coleridge, like some great river, the Orellana or St. Lawrence, that having been checked and fretted by rocks or

thwarting islands, suddenly recovers its volume of waters and its mighty music—swept at once, as if returning to his natural business, into a continuous strain of eloquent dissertation," certainly the most novel, the most finely illustrated, and traversing the most spacious fields of thought by transitions the most just and logical it was possible to conceive." De Quincey returned to Bristol, and there made acquaintance with the kind Cottle, the bookseller, from whom he inquired into the circumstances of the poet who had so dazzled and entranced him, with the desire of making some offering that might be of service. The result was that Coleridge accepted a gift of three hundred pounds from the young enthusiast, who had but lately come into possession of his fortune, and was full of natural enthusiasm and generosity. It is the drawback of all such generosities that it is difficult to shut out of our mind an uncomfortable feeling in respect to the recipient of the gift; a feeling which in this case he himself, it is evident, shared most deeply, as may be seen from the agitated letter to Cottle, in which he accepts it, necessity and gratitude struggling with the pangs of wounded pride and conscious failure. It was supposed by the young man that Coleridge was unaware who his benefactor was; but he did know it, sooner or later.

Shortly after this the young worshipper of genius (he was twenty-two, and the poets were from ten to fifteen years his seniors) accompanied Mrs. Coleridge to the north. She was going with her children back to

Keswick, where she had some years before received the Southey family, and where they were now awaiting her. It was a great chance for the shy little student: for Mrs. Coleridge was to visit the Wordsworths on the way, and this opened to him at once, on the footing of intimacy, the other two poetic households, in which, for the time, all the fortune of poetry seemed enclosed. He shared a post-chaise for the long journey with that poor lady, once the pensive Sara of Coleridge's tender fancy, but whose commonplace prettiness and ordinariness little De Quincey now felt himself free to remark upon. It is easy to understand how the young man's heart must have beat when he came in sight of the white roadside cottage, which he had seen a year before from the other side of the lake without daring to approach nearer. Now, with little Hartley, strange poet-child, not the least remarkable of the party, running before him, and all the circumstances of an expected and welcome arrival, he was brought to these genial gates. The minute description he gives of the house and its inmates is very pleasant. Evidently Wordsworth and all his belongings were more sacred to the observer than Coleridge, whose brotherhood of pain and weakness seems to have mingled in the mind of the man, who was hereafter to be known as the Opium Eater, something of contempt rather than of fellow-feeling. Reflected from his higher reverence for Wordsworth was a respect for everybody at Grasmere—the poet's wife, who could say nothing but "God bless you," as well

as the inspired Dorothy, she who was the fountain-head of finest influence, the more spiritual part of the genius which filled the house. After a few days in this idyllic house of poverty (or, at least, the most restricted living) and poetry, De Quincey set out in Wordsworth's close companionship for Keswick. Part of the way they walked together like old and familiar friends; and Wordsworth, with that confidence and readiness to communicate which was characteristic of the brotherhood, read the "White Doe of Rylstone" to his new friend on one of their halts. The next evening the pedestrians arrived at the other house, where, as the sounds of an arrival made themselves heard, "Mr. Coleridge and a gentleman of very striking appearance" came to the door to welcome them. This was Southey. Thus the journey was like an ideal progress; the very names of the three families, the magical landscapes round them, the talk of poems written and unwritten, of philosophies musical as Apollo's lute, filled the air with strange enchantment—in the midst of which stands the small eccentric figure of the newcomer, like an eldritch grown-up child, with wonderful ideas gleaming out in his talk, and a great awe and admiration in his mind—yet with no true faculty of worship in him, but much of the temper of the valet to whom his master is no hero.

De Quincey settled at Grasmere in the white roadside cottage which Wordsworth had once occupied, a short time after this introduction to the gods of the region: and lived there for eleven years, during which time many things happened to him. His picture of

the pleasant country life, so fresh and simple, is our best way of knowing what these great brethren were about in this mid period of their career. If the little subacid tone in De Quincey's descriptions—a sort of amiable spite, and desire to show the reader that the gods be but men after all, and that he himself saw through them—is unpleasant to some readers, it will perhaps increase the interest of others, to whom, without a little depreciation, no picture looks true. It is in his favour that Wordsworth's children grew very fond of De Quincey; he was a something between themselves and the legitimate elders, the grown-up people, to whom the little man could scarcely be imagined to belong. Some way off, even farther than a country neighbour is permitted to be, was Charles Lloyd, who has been referred to in a previous chapter, the "young friend" who "proposed to domesticate" himself with Coleridge in the early days of Nether Stowey, a feeble brother, subject to melancholy delusions, and with a dark vein of religious despair running through his gentle life, but of refined mind, and even mild poetic faculty, enough, according to the kind estimate of the poets, to give him some slight footing among them in addition to the claims of friendship. They were all very kind in their estimation of the poetical satellites who circulated about them, conscientiously criticising their gentle sonnets, and applauding the little verses which the rest of us, on our low level, are apt to be impatient of. Lloyd had circulated about among them during their earlier days, going from Coleridge to Southey, and

thence to Lamb, somewhat endangering, for the moment, their cordial fellowship; for nobody likes to be deserted by the friend who is "domesticated" with him, for the sake of another friend, however dear. All those little difficulties, however, were over before now, and Lloyd had settled among them as a neighbour, taking, by reason of his ample means, a prominent part in the little society. De Quincey speaks of the "judicious assortment of dinner parties," and the "gaiety of *soirées dansantes*" at this friendly house. It was there he saw for the first time a man as unlike himself as it is possible to imagine — one who had been a hero of the Oxford world, while the quaint little undergraduate of Worcester buried himself in his rooms, or wandered by night in out-of-the-way haunts, apart from the cheerful current of the general life. It was only now, from a corner of the dancing-room at Low Brathay, that he saw his contemporary, the boast of Magdalen, the hero of a thousand adventures, John Wilson of Elleray, the happy, young, triumphant athlete, whose life had as yet been signalised by no great intellectual effort. Shortly after they met at Wordsworth's, and were there introduced to each other. They became friends at once, and remained so as long as they lived, in the strangest union. During the early years of their friendship they wandered together over the hills and dales, as oddly consorted a couple as it is possible to imagine, Wilson with a largeness about him which was not all size, an expansion and bigness of soul as well as body, a dauntless athleticism of the mind as

well as of the thews and sinews, joyous, fearless, all-adventuring; and by his side the odd, sensitive, abstract little man, light and shivery as a bird upon the bough, full of dreams and visions, a being with as little flesh and blood as possible—sufficient and no more to house his soul in. It is pleasant to realise them as they went along in prolonged and endless talk, such as they both loved, with enthusiasms which were the same yet so different, and minds occupied on similar matters, though from points of view so unlike.

Nothing could be more strange and unlike other people, indeed, than the little dreamer in the Grasmere cottage. He had been an opium eater, or rather drinker, his decanter of laudanum holding the place of wholesome wine on his table for some time, and under that influence was subject to the most lovely and terrible visions, the one counterbalancing the other. Amid the roses that covered his walls outside, and the books which crowded them within, he sat and mused, and dreamed, his imagination wandering in the most curious byways. At night he sallied forth upon long silent walks. "What I liked in these solitary rambles," he says, "was to trace the course of the evening through its household hieroglyphics from the windows which I passed, or saw; to see the blazing fire shining through the windows of the houses, lurking in nooks far apart from neighbours; sometimes in solitudes that seemed abandoned to the owl to catch the sounds of household mirth; then some miles further to perceive the time of going to bed; then the gradual sink-

ing to silence of the house; then the drowsy reign of the cricket; at intervals to hear church clocks, or a little solitary chapel bell, under the brow of mighty hills, proclaiming the hours of the night, and flinging out their sudden knells over the graves where 'the rude forefathers of the hamlet sleep.'" This fresh glimpse of the dim and narrow valleys, with the twinkles of light here and there, the veil of night over them, the stars twinkling on the hill-tops, the distant clocks striking out of the gloom, the sleeping houses by which the night-wanderer strayed, is wonderfully perfect in its kind. He loved nature, and had an eye to see her meanings, without any of the drawbacks which interfered with his appreciation of men. But when sickness and sorrow came among the children of the Wordsworth family, the grief of their strange little neighbour was heartrending. They were more afraid of breaking to him the news of a child's death than to the father. He speaks of "the fierce convulsion of grief" which "mastered his faculties" on the occasion of the little Catherine's death—with a voice which, years after, is still hysterical with the unwonted passion—after spending the night upon her grave, "in an intensity of sick frantic yearning after the darling of my heart;" and when another child died, Wordsworth himself communicated the news "most tenderly and lovingly, with heavy sorrow for you, my dear friend," as if the stranger had been more to the infant than himself.

Whether the state of nervous excitement in which his opium kept him had anything to do with this

excessive tender-heartedness, it seems uncharitable to inquire; but before De Quincey left his Grasmere cottage, the agonies of mind to which his indulgence in opium exposed him had become almost insupportable. He had married in the meantime the daughter of a dalesman—a woman as tender, patient, and all-enduring as any who ever stood between a drunkard and his fate. And how much is that to say! He never failed in loving appreciation of her, though he filled her life with troubles. But the strange nature, full of vagaries, and unaffected by any sense of duty, which De Quincey had from his cradle, and the growth of self-indulgence and opium, made an end before long of fortune, such as it was. All unfitted for the struggles of the world, and to work for his daily subsistence, he had to do so *tant bien que mal*, going off on forlorn expeditions to London to seek work, and making equally perilous attempts in Westmoreland to set up newspapers and organise literary undertakings. In the same way, and with the same futile end, as has been recorded, Coleridge, some time before, had begun the publication of the *Friend*, which had a brief existence of some eight-and twenty-numbers, a confused subscription list, and a range of subjects far too serious and profound to attract ordinary readers. De Quincey's ideas soared no higher than a *Westmoreland Gazette*, but he hoped to "float" this triumphantly in all the learned circles of the land by means of the exertions of his friends. All this, however, was failure unmitigated; and troubles grew, and with them that dark assistant

out of the pains of the moment, and creator of new troubles, the ever-ready drug, the "doses of oblivion." It is very strange that independently, not influencing each other, two men in the same small circle, Coleridge and De Quincey, should both have been the victims of this living death.

The *Confessions of an Opium Eater*, which were published in the *London Magazine* in 1821, is the most important of De Quincey's works. His disquisitions on the poets will always be interesting to the students of the period, and of that great brotherhood—but they are injured by many traces of that familiarity which breeds contempt. We want, indeed, to know the truth about the greatest representatives of the age, but not to have a piece of adverse gossip, or the repetition of an ill-advised confidence. De Quincey's descriptions and bursts of poetic musing are often brilliant, exquisite in form and language. Nobody puts better on his canvas an aspect of nature, or gives us in more detailed and faithful circumstance the surroundings of a human scene. He is not so happy with men, because, for one thing, of his habit of detractation, which forbade him from seeing into what Wordsworth prosaically calls "the very heart of the machine;" and finally, perhaps, from his own eccentricities and out-of-the-way thoughts. He wrote many volumes of essays, and criticisms of various kinds, and his best work has found a place among English classics. The delicate wit and irony of the essay upon "Murder as one of the Fine Arts" has moved, many a reader to such a laugh, tempered with

a thrill of visionary excitement and horror, as is rare among the laughters of literature. It is an undue honour to this curious little monster in literature to place him by the side of Lamb; but the connection of both with the greater group of poets supplies an arbitrary link of association.

CHARLES LAMB, born 1775; died 1834.

Published Poems with Coleridge, 1797.
Blank Verses (with Charles Lloyd), 1798.
John Woodvil, 1801.
Tales from Shakspeare (with Mary Lamb), 1807.
Specimens of English Dramatic Poetry, 1808.
Poetry for Children, 1809.
Essays of Elia, 1822.
(Originally published in *London Magazine.*)
Album Verses, 1830.

THOMAS DE QUINCEY, born 1785; died 1859.

Published Confessions of an English Opium Eater, 1822.
(Originally published in *London Magazine.*)
Essays under various titles.
Essenism, The Cæsars, etc.
Autobiography, Recollections of Lake Poets, etc.
Suspiria de Profundis.
(Originally published in various periodicals; reissued in complete and revised edition, 1862.)

CHAPTER II.

THE CRITICS.

THE art of criticism can never be a heroic art. Of its nature and essence it is secondary, since until there is a literature to be judged, no tribunal of judgment can be formed. It is at best but the aftermath of every intellectual harvest, and it is often the very last and feeblest growth of an exhausted soil. But the more literature grows, and the more widely education is diffused, the more this secondary art will spread and flourish. It is not possible, when the world of readers is extended to the very limits of space, that they can all, or even a tithe of them, judge for themselves; it is not possible even that they should know the mere names of the books which are hurrying from all the printing-presses with a view to their edification; and thus the race of middlemen become indispensable in letters, as in so many other spheres. It has come in our own days to unparalleled importance, and is almost worthy to be counted as one of the learned professions — at least, if not one of the learned professions, as a practical byway in which a large number of intelligences nominally belonging to these, get bread and get importance. It is a dangerous art —

dangerous to the public, who are often badly guided, though the perils in this respect are largely modified by a native instinct, which keeps the mass tolerably right whatever advice may be lavished on it; dangerous to authors, who are often injured and irritated, and sometimes embittered beyond redemption, by assaults made in pure *gaiété de cœur;* and, above all, dangerous to the critics themselves, who can hardly fail, in the long run, to feel themselves as superior in reality to the writers they discuss as they seem at the moment of discussion by means of the artificial platform to which their judgeship raises them. As the office is voluntary, and as it is most frequently anonymous, it is a most fruitful source of literary impertinence and flippancy, and very destructive to every natural sentiment of respect and veneration. When a young man, fresh from college, with no particular qualification but the gift of writing tolerable prose, finds himself set up on a veiled and visionary throne, from which he can throw forth his thunderbolts on the loftiest head, with the certainty of producing more amusement the more daring his strictures and the sharper his hits may be, he would be more than mortal if he did not yield to the temptation. Therefore, in all ages critics have been the natural enemies, the disgust, or the terror of authors; and in proportion as they have been wittily insolent and cleverly unjust, have they been relished by the keen appetite of the public and encouraged by the crowd. There are few things so amusing as to read a really "slashing article"—except perhaps to write it. It is infinitely

easier and gayer work than a well-weighed and serious criticism, and will always be more popular. The lively and brilliant examples of the art which dwell in the mind of the reader are invariably of this class. If we remember with horror the article that was said (but with very partial truth) to have killed poor Keats, we prepare ourselves for pleasure when we see Macaulay draw a book towards him and whet the knife which is "to cut it up." In the present day of critical newspapers, those which we know as ill-natured are always the most popular. It affords opportunities for making fun of the finest genius to those who are acquainted with the way of it: and in no other way can a little faculty go so far.

It is not our intention by these prefatory remarks to undervalue the wonderful new development of the art of criticism which took place in the beginning of the present century. We think, indeed, that, like so many other things, having been unduly celebrated to all the echoes as something more brilliant than was ever known before, it has fallen into somewhat unmerited shadow now. Those who desire to know what criticism was before its time, may judge by such productions as Gifford's *Baviad* and *Mæviad*, in which, indeed, the authors criticised are of so small an order that it is scarcely necessary to name them in a history of literature, though they might afford an amusing chapter from their very foolishness, did space permit. The follies of Della Crusca, the Laura Matildas, the Julias, the Edwins and Annas, were all swept away, it is said, by Gifford's sharp birch

broom: but the delicacies of style with which the critic treated his subject are remarkable, to say the least. "Most of these fashionable writers were connected with the public prints," he says of one group of harmless rhymesters; "Della Crusca was a worthy coadjutor of the mad and malignant idiot who conducted the *World;* Edwin and Anna Matilda were favoured contributors to several; and Laura Maria, from the sums squandered on puffs, could command a corner in all. This wretched woman, indeed, in the wane of her beauty, fell into merited poverty, exchanged poetry for politics, and wrote abusive trash against the Government, at the rate of two guineas a week, for the *Morning Post.*" This was the style which the literary critic used in these days; and when we add that the "wretched woman" thus described had sinned no further against literature than by sending foolish verses to a newspaper, the reader will be doubly impressed by the value of this critic's corrections. Southey and Coleridge were then supporting their young households by the two guineas weekly, which each of them earned by verses in the *Morning Post* or *Chronicle,* and there was nothing either undignified or unusual in this mode of publication. But Coleridge and Southey were higher game, and Gifford does not seem to have touched them with his rude hand. He was one of those writers whom, having no other distinction, and no special place in literature, we can call only literary men. He has a kind of mild poetical standing on the score of some "copies of verses," one of which — "I wish I were where

Anna lies"—is very little superior to the productions he demolished so ruthlessly, and has the additional disadvantage of recalling to us, and risking a comparison with, one of the most touching of primitive ballads, the heartrending history of Helen of Kirkconnel,[1] well known to all lovers of song. But except by these verses, Gifford's sole claim to recollection is his critical work, and his position as the editor of the *Anti-Jacobin* and the first series of the *Quarterly*, in which last office this bitter scribbler "put pepper into the quill" with which Mr. Wilson Croker (upon whom Macaulay afterwards executed poetic justice) did all he could to assassinate poor young Keats. Gifford had begun life very humbly, and his Anna was his housekeeper—an appropriate muse.

It was, however, a much finer hand which wielded the scourge upon the larger names which in that day graced the Poets' Corner of the *Morning Post* and *Chronicle:* and the chastisement thus inflicted has taken a permanent place in literature not accorded to the poetical trifles which called it forth. George Canning is one of the most brilliant names

[1] It is not a bad lesson in literary taste to compare the awful critic's verses with those of the national poet:—

I wish I were where Helen lies,
Night and day on me she cries;
Oh that I were where Helen lies,
On fair Kirkconnel lee.

O Helen! fair beyond compare!
I'll mak' a garland o' thy hair,
Shall twine my heart for evermair,
Until the day I dee.

I wish I were where Anna lies,
For I am sick of lingering here;
And every hour Affection cries,
Go and partake her humble bier.

I wish I could; for when she died
I lost my all, and life has proved
Since that sad hour a dreary void—
A waste unlovely and unloved.

in modern English history. His early life is more like that of one of Lord Beaconsfield's astonishing heroes than of any young aspirant in more veritable records. Born in misery, and brought up for the first dozen years of his life in the shabby discomfort and almost destitution of a poor actor's shifting and uncertain home, he was transported from that dismal life behind the scenes to the genial daylight of Eton and Oxford as by an enchanter's wand. The transformation was no less striking that it was merely a transfer to the position in which he was born, for his father, George Canning, was the disinherited eldest son of an Irish gentleman of property; and poor Mrs. Reddish, the actress, then married for the second time, had been one of the belles of society, though now sunk so low. Canning's brilliant abilities displayed themselves at Eton in the little school journal, the *Microcosm*, which has never in all the generations of school "Chronicles," "Ramblers," etc., been approached again. And the young man did all that a young man ought to do at Oxford, attracted and was attracted by only such companions as were excellent and could help him on in the world, which, alas! is by no means the invariable consequence of university life. When he came up to Lincoln's Inn to study law, his career was, in some respects, exactly the same as that of the young Endymion, the last hero of Lord Beaconsfield. Like him, he attended the meetings of a debating society, and soon made himself a name in its discussions. But Canning was so far different from Endymion that he had to change

his politics before he got into the way of fortune. He had been born and bred a Whig, and as a Whig had been known at Oxford. It is reported by some that a visit from Godwin, asking him to put himself at the head of a revolutionary movement, was the touch which sent the eager young man to the other side; and by others, that Pitt himself, hearing of his great qualities, took pains to have him brought within his own personal influence. A clever young man, or rather a young man of abilities so distinguished, was a prize for either party at a time when so much was going on, and when politics ran so high.

Whether, as in the case of Endymion, the great ladies of society, with soft determination, pushed the young man on, we are not now in a position to tell; but certain it is, that, entering Parliament in his twenty-fourth year, he became an Under Secretary of State when he was twenty-five. It was after he had thus entered the magic circle of power that he took his place in literature, in a way so easy, so mirthful and youthful, yet so effective. France was in those days the prevailing thought in every man's mind. The enthusiasm with which the poetical youth of the time contemplated this great typical country, working out her tragical problem for the enlightenment of the age, has been already referred to; and there was a strong feeling of sympathy and interest in the wider circle of general society everywhere. But after the massacres of September, and the setting up of the guillotine, this sentiment had undergone a great change;

and though there was an influential and able party which stood by what they believed to be the cause of freedom, even in spite of Napoleon's first conquests, and which strongly opposed and discountenanced the war into which England had entered, yet the usual dogged patriotism and determination to be on our own side impelled public opinion the other way. The young minister and recent convert to the dominant creed found a glorious opportunity of distinguishing himself and furnishing his party with that weapon of ridicule which is always so effective in political warfare, at the expense of the new poets, his contemporaries, whose contributions to the Liberal newspapers, even when without absolute political meaning, gave additional popularity and *prestige* to these journals. It is an easy, if by no means an elevated method of criticism, to connect the names of political sympathisers in any great movement with the violent extremes into which it may run; but it is little less than ludicrous nowadays to see the respectable and virtuous Southey, whose phase of Radicalism was so short-lived, and the dreamy and philosophical Coleridge, credited with a wish to bring in the Guillotine, to set the streets of London running with blood as the streets of Paris had been, and to aid in the dark designs of Buonaparté, as he is always called, the Italian pronunciation of the young General's name not having yet given way to the French. It can scarcely be supposed that Canning and his colleagues believed anything of the kind, but it furnished them with such an occasion at once for

frolic and for partisan warfare that they would have been more than mortal had they foregone their advantage. Had there not been a Canning in the camp, with all the zeal of a recent convert, and a schoolboy love of fun to light up the crusade, the *Anti-Jacobin* would have shared the fate of other short-lived political satires. The forced fun of the prospectus was too heavy to attract the reader:—

"We have not arrived (to our shame, perhaps, we avow it) at that wild and unshackled freedom of thought which rejects all habit, all wisdom of former times, all restraint of ancient usage and of local attachment, and which judges upon each subject, whether of politics or morals, as it arises, by lights entirely its own, without reference to recognised principle or established practice. We confess, whatever disgrace may attend such a confession, that we have not so far got the better of the influence of long habits and early education, not so far imbibed that spirit of liberal indifference, of diffused and comprehensive philanthropy, which distinguishes the candid character of the present age, but that we have our feelings, our preferences, our affections, attending on particular places, manners, and institutions, and even on particular portions of the human race. It may be thought a narrow and illiberal distinction, but we avow ourselves to be *partial* to the COUNTRY *in which we live*, notwithstanding the daily panegyrics which we read and hear of the superior virtues and endowments of her rival and hostile neighbours. We are prejudiced in favour of *her* establishments, civil and religious, though without claiming for either that ideal perfection which modern philosophy professes to discover in the more luminous subjects that are arising on all sides of us. . . . If, as Philosopher Monge avers in his eloquent and instructive address to the Directory, '*The Government of England and the French Republic cannot exist together*,' we do not hesitate in our choice, though well aware that in that choice we may be liable, in the opinion of many critics of the present day, to the imputation of a want of

candour or of discernment. Admirers of military heroism are dazzled by military successes, in common with other men. We are yet, even *here*, conscious of some qualification and distinction in our feelings. We acknowledge ourselves apt to look with more complacency on bravery or skill when displayed in the service of our country, than when we see them directed against its interests or its safety; and however equal the claims to admiration in either case may be, we feel our hearts grow warmer at the recital of what has been achieved by HOWE, by JARVIS, or by DUNCAN, than at '*the glorious victory of Jemappes*, or '*the immortal battle of the bridge of Lodi.*' In MORALS we are equally old fashioned. We have yet to learn the modern refinement of referring, in all considerations upon human conduct, not to any settled and preconceived principles of right and wrong; not to any general and fundamental rules which experience, and wisdom, and justice, and the common consent of mankind, have established; but to the internal admonition of every man's judgment or conscience in his own particular instance. . . . We have not yet persuaded ourselves to think it a safe or a sound doctrine that every man who can divest himself of a moral error in theory has a right to be with impunity and without disguise a scoundrel in practice. It is not in our creed that ATHEISM is as good a faith as CHRISTIANITY, provided it be professed with equal sincerity; nor could we admit it as an excuse for MURDER that the murderer was in his own mind conscientiously persuaded that the murdered might, for many good reasons, be better out of the way. Of all these and the like principles—in one word, of JACOBINISM in all its shapes and all its degrees, political and moral, public and private, whether as it openly threatens the subversion of States, or gradually saps the foundations of domestic happiness, we are the avowed, determined, and irreconcilable enemies."

This elaborate irony may be new to the reader, who knows little probably about the *Anti-Jacobin* except the delightful mockery of its verses. It is curious to imagine that Englishmen could ever have

been supposed to take the part of the national enemy in such a crisis: and whether the lively and brilliant writers of the *Anti-Jacobin* believed their own accusations, it is hard to tell; but politics were a passion in that age of overthrow, and England had begun to be excited by ideas of invasion, and the blood of the people was getting up. The newspapers of the time, moreover, were strong upon the Liberal side, and many active minds, and a great deal of literary force, seems to have been engaged in the formation of that great power of the daily journals, then a comparatively new institution, and taking advantage of every means possible, even of poetry, to secure its footing. The serious object of Canning's paper was, according to the prospectus, not only to record events and deliver its opinion upon them, but especially to produce "a contradiction and confutation of the falsehoods and misrepresentations concerning those events, their causes, and their consequences, which may be found in the papers devoted to the cause of SEDITION and IRRELIGION, to the pay and principles of FRANCE." The confutation of these "lies and misrepresentations" occupies much the greater part of the *Anti-Jacobin*; but all this has fallen, heavy as a stone, into the waters of oblivion.

That which has survived is of a more ethereal order. It so happened that Southey, always venturesome and rash in metres, had advised himself unwarily to produce, among his weekly tale of verses for his newspaper, some curious experiments in classic measures. They were learned, but they were not happy, and it is

to be supposed that either the evident imperfections of them, or the humour of the imitation, scared him in future from this special byway of the poetic paths. Southey's Sapphics were in no way political, but it is easy to see how irresistibly tempting they would be to the malicious young statesman, more learned in Greek measures than Southey himself, and eagerly on the outlook for anything by which he could raise a laugh against his adversaries. It was not difficult to make them out to be an attempt to cause enmity between the rich and the poor, while the opportunity at once for fun and vengeance was not to be passed by. Southey's verses are scarcely worth quoting. They began as follows;—

"Cold was the night wind; drifting fast the snows fell;
Wide were the downs, and shelterless and naked:
When a poor wand'rer struggled on her journey
Weary and way-sore."

Swiftly upon this unfortunate experiment followed the lightning stroke of satire. There are few poems better known than the "Needy Knife-Grinder;" but we believe the majority of readers are ignorant of the object of this masterly mockery—

FRIEND OF HUMANITY.

"Needy Knife-grinder! whither are you going?
Rough is the road, your wheel is out of order—
Bleak blows the blast;—your hat has got a hole in't,
So have your breeches!

"Weary knife-grinder! little think the proud ones,
Who in their coaches roll along the turnpike-
-road, what hard work 'tis crying all day, 'Knives and
Scissars to grind O!'

"Tell me, Knife-grinder, how came you to grind knives?
Did some rich man tyrannically use you?
Was it the squire? or parson of the parish;
Or the attorney?

"Was it the squire, for killing of his game? or
Covetous parson, for his tithes distraining?
Or roguish lawyer, made you lose your little
All in a lawsuit?

"(Have you not read the 'Rights of Man,' by Tom Paine?)
Drops of compassion tremble on my eyelids,
Ready to fall, as soon as you have told your
Pitiful story."

KNIFE-GRINDER.

"Story! God bless you! I have none to tell, sir,
Only last night a-drinking at the Chequers,
This poor old hat and breeches, as you see, were
Torn in a scuffle.

"Constables came up for to take me into
Custody; they took me before the justice;
Justice Oldmixon put me in the parish-
-stocks for a vagrant.

"I should be glad to drink your Honour's health in
A pot of beer, if you will give me sixpence;
But for my part, I never love to meddle
With politics, sir."

FRIEND OF HUMANITY.

"*I* give thee sixpence! I will see thee damn'd first—
Wretch! whom no sense of wrongs can rouse to vengeance;
Sordid, unfeeling, reprobate, degraded,
Spiritless outcast!

"Kicks the knife-grinder, overturns his wheel, and exit in a transport of republican enthusiasm and universal philanthropy."

Equally clever, and full of ludicrous suggestions which have clung to the popular mind ever since, is the drama of the "Rovers" in which the new Teutonic inspiration which was beginning to move the world, the "Robbers" of Schiller, the plays of Lessing, and — a long way behind these — the dramas of Kotzebue—were satirised. The wonderful lyric in praise of "sweet Matilda Pottingen" is almost as well known as the "Knife-Grinder;" and the sudden resolution of the two ladies in the "Rovers," meeting for the first time in their lives, to "swear eternal friendship" is quoted every day by many people who have no notion where it comes from. These verses have kept the *Anti-Jacobin* alive. The serious part of it lost all possibility of living when the Revolution scare passed away from the public mind, and England no longer feared her own harmless and deeply disappointed visionaries.

Canning's coadjutor in this work, as in the Eton journal, was John Hookham Frere, the son of a Suffolk family of long-established gentry, with ancestors both learned and remarkable, and all the advantages an English gentleman with good connections, wealth, and reputation could desire. He belonged to the highest class of social life, and lived among statesmen and diplomatists from the beginning of his days—a circumstance which, by some curious law of compensation, makes the record of his life far more commonplace than if he had been a poor lad on the roadside of existence, or a Blue-coat boy about the London streets. Perhaps, however, had they been born on the less exalted level, Hookham

Frere would never have developed into anything higher than a witty citizen, or Canning been much greater than a brilliant Deputy or Common Council man. The lives which are swallowed up in political movement, with nothing but scanty glimpses of society to make up for their lack of human interest, are sadly flat in the recounting. Frere was so closely connected with his still more distinguished friend, that even the "Knife-Grinder" is presented indifferently in the collections of both their works, and nobody now can tell which lines came from one pen and which from the other. His chief independent production was the satirical poem known as "Whistlecraft," in the lively and vigorous metre afterwards adopted and made popular by Byron in "Don Juan" and "Beppo," for which, indeed, Byron owned some obligation to Frere, though he afterwards preferred to describe himself as taking his inspiration from the Italian of Pulci. Frere, no doubt, found his model there; and his poem in many parts reads like the livelier and lighter portions of "Don Juan." Another piece of work for which his reputation is still high among scholars is his translation of the "Birds" and "Acharnians" of Aristophanes, one of the few translations which are said to render the spirit and life of the original. He was the holder of various diplomatic offices, and lived at Malta during the later part of his life, the friend of all distinguished persons whom Providence wafted that way.

Canning's fame is too great, and his historical position too important, to permit him to linger here, in the stiller regions of the literary world. The

sudden smiling onslaught of the young statesman, fresh from the academical career which he had passed through so brilliantly, and still new to the larger sphere that had received him so early, is as interesting as it is daring and effective. We feel like spectators in a crowd when an unforeseen accident happens, and the throng closes round to see what the wonder is. It is as if in an ordinary game some agile young prince should spring in and take the bat for an innings, and send the ball high over everybody's head in a long-celebrated hit, hereafter to be talked of among the traditions of the gods. Such was Canning's appearance in our world of letters. It was the best of jokes, the most delightful, ready, and telling stroke which a chance combatant ever made. But he had no time to linger upon it or repeat it, which was all the better for its fame.

A few years after the short-lived *Anti-Jacobin*, which lasted only about six months, had run its little course in London, the first great periodical organ of criticism had its beginning in the North. In the opening years of the century, a group of lively and able young men, with superabundant talent and spirit, and not half enough to do, had gathered together in a cheerful little society in Edinburgh. They were chiefly young lawyers, with some young "foreigners" —so described by Lord Cockburn—Englishmen whose presence in the Scotch capital was more remarkable, though, at the same time, in this particular way more usual than at the present time: for we do not think it at all a common thing nowadays that scions of English

aristocracy should be found pursuing their studies in a Scotch university. The young advocates were all of liberal opinions, and consequently out of favour in the courts. They were shut out from hopes of advancement, from all the Sheriffships and official posts which keep the Scotch bar in vigour. Lord Cockburn, their historian, points out that this exclusion was not without its compensating privilege. "It gave them leisure," he says, which, unfortunately, is an advantage possessed by young barristers everywhere, without, we fear, very much good resulting either to themselves or any one else. "Being all branded with the same mark, and put under the same ban, they were separated into a set of their own, within which there was mirth and friendship, study and hope, ambitions and visions. There was a particular place at the north end of the Outer House which was the known haunt of these doomed youths; and there did they lounge, session after session, and year after year, employed sufficiently now and then by a friendly agent to show what was in them; but never enough to make them feel that they were engaged in a fair professional competition; reconciled, however, to their fate, and not at all depressed by their bad character." Among these young Scots were two Englishmen, one (Lord Webb Seymour) a spectator rather than a member of the band, the other, one of the most lively and energetic of the group, a young clergyman, full of wit, which often verged upon the profane, and never at a loss for a happy gibe or humorous mystification. He it was who described the brotherhood as "cultivating litera-

ture on a little oatmeal," a witty rendering of a well-known description. They were none of them rich, but they were all young, and held in constant activity by the lively fire which burned in their bosoms of opposition to all the old-world authorities who kept them down, but over whom they were born to triumph. After the day of weary attendance upon fortune, pacing up and down that historical pavement of the Parliament House, they met round the supper-table they loved, in some high story of an Edinburgh house, where, near the skies, they could look out on one side over the Firth, or on the other watch the magical lights upon the crest of the old town, and Arthur's Seat in shadowy grandeur behind. It was not possible that so much vigour and vitality should remain without some kind of utterance.

Edinburgh was five or six times as far from London in those days as it is now, and though independent in opinion, was sadly wanting in opportunities of giving that opinion expression. Two or three trifling newspapers and an insignificant magazine were all the means of utterance possessed by a highly intellectual society, and a school of learning and science sufficiently distinguished to call students to it from the most unlikely regions. Nothing could be more natural than that these vigorous and able young men, to whom, in their own profession, employment was so scanty, should have turned to literature as the readiest expedient by which they could find footing in life, and say their say upon matters which were to them of the profoundest interest. To all appearance literature, as a task to live by, had

not occurred to them at the outset; but they chafed at their inaction and to feel how little power they had of influencing the world. One stormy spring night the brotherhood was assembled in Jeffrey's little house in Buccleuch Place, on what Sydney Smith describes, with his usual amusing exaggeration, as "the eighth or ninth story," when the smouldering projects came to a final head. "I proposed that we should set up a Review," says Sydney Smith, "this was acceded to with acclamation." They talked it over seriously, yet with much of the malicious delight of a band of schoolboys planning a mystification. The wind was high among the roofs in that home of the winds, and as they listened to it, shaking the doors and windows, there was much "merriment at the greater storm they were about to raise." None of them were old enough to be indifferent to this. The delight of rousing all the echoes, of aiming here and there a blow that would make their adversaries tingle, was warm in their minds. Francis Jeffrey, who was the future head of the band, "the Arch-critic" as he was called by some of his friends,—Judge Jeffrey, as his victims entitled him in rueful reference to a still more reckless slayer, —was a vivacious, brilliant, and indomitable spirit, lodged in one of the most insignificant of bodily forms. He had already begun to write before this momentous resolution was taken, and was, we think, the only one among them of any literary experience. By his side was Henry Brougham, a lank and sinewy Borderer, with the protuberant nose of genius, and an ambition which was boundless, the future Lord

Chancellor of England, one of the most restless, busy, and important figures of his time; and Sydney Smith, a very unclerical clergyman, yet withal no bad representative of the easy-going English parson of the time, with an honest idea of duty, but no particular delicacy about his profession or devotion to it. These were the three most fully identified with the work. Many others appear and disappear across the scene, the gentle Horner; Grahame of the "Sabbath," a mild and tender soul, much more clerical than his fellow priest, Allen, afterwards the medical officer and ministrant of all the social wits at Holland House, and many more: but these three appear always in the front of the group: Jeffrey, rapid and eager, flying on ahead, throwing his spear here and there out of frolic if for nothing else; Brougham bringing down the whole strength of his arm with a more determined meaning; and Sydney Smith smiling over his victims, as he played with them, and gently probed them with his pen. He was the editor, in some sort, of the new Review, at least of the first number—and is said to have written *scores* of the articles in this first number with his own hand. It must be added, however, that these articles were very different, in point of length, from those afterwards adopted. There were twenty-three in the first number, some of them not more than brief critical notices.

This new organ of literary life made its first appearance in October 1802. It was the beginning of the great and popular school of periodical writing. It brought after it the first important modern maga-

zine, that of Blackwood, and all that since have followed in their train.

"The effect (says Lord Cockburn) was electrical. It is impossible for those who did not live at the time and in the heart of the scene to feel, or almost to understand, the impression made by the new luminary, or the anxiety with which its motions were observed. It was an entire and instant change of everything that the public had been used to in that sort of composition. . . . The learning of the new journal, its talent, its spirit, its writing, and its independence, were all new; and the surprise was increased by a work so full of public life springing up suddenly in a remote part of the kingdom. . . . Many thoughtful men, indifferent of party, but anxious for the progress of the human mind, and alarmed lest war and political confusion should restore a new course of dark ages, were cheered by the unexpected appearance of what seemed likely to prove a great depository for the contributions of able men to the cause of philosophy. . . . The splendid career of the journal as it was actually seen was not anticipated either by its authors or by its most ardent admirers, none of whom could foresee its long endurance, or the extent to which the mighty improvements that have reformed our opinions and institutions, and enabled us to engraft the wisdom of experience on the maintainable antiquities of our system, were to depend on this single publication. They only saw the present establishment of a vigour of the highest order for the able and fearless discussion of every matter worthy of being inquired into; but they could not yet discern the consequences."

Mrs. Fletcher, whose reminiscences of Edinburgh life have been published within the last few years, and give a pleasant aid to our comprehension of the period, adds a pretty anecdote which shows the first effect of the publication and the feeling excited by it. She was the wife of an excellent and able man, one of the despised Whig party, whose character and talents

had, however, pushed him forward, out of the cold shade, into a considerable practice at the bar, and whose powers of discrimination rose in this case to absolute divination, *i.e.* the luckiest of guesses.

"The authorship of the different articles was discussed at every dinner-table, and I recollect an occurrence at one house which must have belonged to this year. Mr. Fletcher, though not himself given to scientific inquiry or interests, had been so much struck with the logical and general ability displayed in an article of the young Review on Professor Black's chemistry, that in the midst of a few guests, of whom Henry Brougham was one, he expressed an opinion (while in utter ignorance as to the authorship) to the effect that the man who wrote that article might do or be anything he pleased. Mr. Brougham, who was seated near me at the table, stretched eagerly forward and said: 'What, Mr. Fletcher, be anything? May he be Lord Chancellor?' On which my husband repeated his words with emphasis, 'Yes, Lord Chancellor or anything he desires.'"

The publication which produced so much excitement, and which we have all been taught to look back to not only as one of the most brilliant beginnings of literature, but as the most scathing and severe of literary censors, will scarcely carry out its reputation to the reader who casts his eyes upon it, looking backward now over nearly eighty years of periodical literature. The review of Thalaba, which was the first of the many attacks made upon the new school of poets, does not strike us with any feeling either of undue severity or brilliant malice. Though Jeffrey opposed the supposed Lake poets strenuously and with all his might, he does not rush at them with the war-cry of polemical rage, or the glitter of mingled fun and wrath in his eyes, which is the true

inspiration of a "slashing article." The *Saturday Review*, at its institution, could in this respect have taught many lessons to those critics of the early century whose victims groaned so loudly, and who flattered themselves on such a trenchant use of the knife. The most striking particular in the special criticism to which we have referred is its respectful devotion to the old models. Jeffrey and all his brotherhood were actually suffering for their liberal opinions: the ignorant were prejudiced against them, and even the sensible influenced by an idea that their politics were such as to afford an opening for similar excesses to those of France. That their sympathies were all with the revolutionary party, nobody would have doubted. Mrs. Fletcher, whom we have just quoted, whose husband, though an older man, was of precisely the same class and party, was suspected on her first coming to Edinburgh of having in her possession a small guillotine with which she cut off the heads of the fowls prepared for dinner, and experimented on rats and mice in preparation for the time when "French principles" should have got the upper hand. "This popular belief reached" (says her daughter) "our father's amazed and amused ears by the question asked him in sad earnest by a kindly old Highland clergyman, whether it was possible that a lady he so much respected could be so 'awfully misled'?" These were the principles with which our young writers also were credited — but though the whole excited, half tremulous, half delighted society, looking for something bad enough and violent enough

to thrill them through and through, did somehow manage to secure the thing they looked for, it is amazing to see how little produced it. So far as literature was concerned, this dashing, daring band, making its raid like a Scotch Ishmael upon all established authorities, was on every point of literary tradition as steady as the *Anti-Jacobin* itself, and not more liberal. "Poetry has this much in common with religion," says Jeffrey, "that its standards were fixed long ago by certain inspired writers, whose authority it is no longer lawful to call in question." It would have been very much in consonance with the supposed principles of the writer if this beginning had led to a daring renunciation of any such allegiance to the past: but nothing of the kind follows. It is well known that the most liberal politics by no means involve liberality in religious questions; but in matters of literature, the mere existence of a new school of poetry professing to have "broken loose from the bondage of antient authority and reasserted the independence of genius" would, one might have thought, have secured the sympathy of young men whose determination was to "break the bondage of antient authority" in matters of government, and to "reassert the independence" of all the faculties and opinions. But it was not so. The chief charge brought by the revolutionary Review against the new school of poetry is this: that it is "a system that would teach us to undervalue that vigilance and labour which sustained the loftiness of Milton, and gave energy and direction to the pointed and fine propriety of Pope."

We cannot, indeed, find in the first Review any trace either of extreme opinion, or of that audacious force of expression which so often distinguishes the youthful writer. The criticisms are more judicious than brilliant. In the first half-dozen numbers there are scarcely as many articles marked by any special severity. The three writers who suffer most are all poets, but the verdict in each case has been confirmed more or less by posterity. Charles Lamb's tragedy of "John Woodvil" was condemned alike by friends and foes. Coleridge, whose friendship for the author gives the reviewer occasion for a fling of special sharpness at the end of his paper, was as little pleased with it as Jeffrey could be, and earnestly opposed its publication; and nobody now remembers or cares to remember that our delightful Elia, most lovable and tender of his contemporaries, once attempted to put on the "learned sock." Joanna Baillie's tragedies, which were likewise demolished with great fervour, have secured much respect for their author, but have sunk into practical oblivion, leaving her with a name which no one contests, because nobody is acquainted with the foundation for it. Moore's translation of "Anacreon," which was the third book assailed, is one in defence of which few now would care to take up the critic's glove. The strictures are severe in these cases, but not cruel, and it is difficult to understand upon what the bitter resentment of so many of the lettered class was founded. Another surprising particular which strikes the reader is the numerous criticisms of French books in these early numbers, and the

extremely judicious and moderate way in which the questions of recent French history are treated. Though the fever was scarcely subsiding in the veins of the public, which had swept through everybody's pulses so short a time before, it is with the most perfect reasonableness and composure that Jeffrey treated the great question of the origin of revolution in France in the very beginning of the new periodical. It would scarcely be possible to take up the subject more soberly in the present day.

Nevertheless, whether it was that the sudden plunge of the little brotherhood of the North into this supposed crusade of criticism affected the imagination of the public, or that a certain amount of alarm and amusement was called forth by this sudden lifting up of a standard in so unexpected a quarter, there can be no doubt of the real effect produced. The latter argument, no doubt, told for something. A local reputation is a wonderful support to every new beginner, and though the influential circles in Edinburgh did not agree with or approve the Whig band, they still showed a national pride in the new undertaking, which was the most popular as well as by far the most ambitious literary undertaking in existence. The establishment of a High Court of Judicature in Edinburgh, before which all English writers should be capable of being arraigned, was a matter of pleasure and self-satisfaction to the most Tory judge on the bench, as well as to the fiery young politicians who conducted the enterprise. The fact of being the smaller and poorer in a copartnership, the least con-

siderable member of a union, has almost invariably this effect; and it has been eminently the case in Scotland that the pleasure of rivalling, or even, as she has hoped, surpassing, her stronger partner, has always elated her, whether the success was achieved in the way most congenial to her traditions or not. And it is scarcely possible to avoid remarking the natural converse of this feeling in the sentiment of the writers assailed, whose proverbial objection to criticism was embittered by the unexpected quarter from which it came, and who looked upon their assailants on the other side of the Tweed with an annoyed and jealous dislike, and something of that angry surprise with which the sudden onslaught, and what is more, victory, of a stripling, of whom nobody was afraid, might be regarded by his seniors and superiors.

Of these sulky and alarmed spectators Southey is the best spokesman. "The *Edinburgh Review* will not keep its ground," he says. "It consists of pamphlets instead of critical accounts." "Of Judge Jeffrey, of the *Edinburgh Review*, I must ever think and speak as of a bad politician, a worse moralist, and a critic in matters of taste equally incompetent and unjust." In another place, the most courteous and amiable of poets speaks of "a Scotch scoundrel calculating how to make the most per sheet with the least amount of labour." When he visited Edinburgh in 1805, his verdict both upon his special critic and the society in general was of the most contemptuous kind, though always with a snarl of alarmed rage in it. "Scotch society disappointed me," he says, "as it must do a

man who loves conversation instead of discussion. Of the three faculties of the mind, they seem exclusively to prefer judgment. They have nothing to teach and a great deal more to learn than I should care to be at the trouble of instructing them in." Jeffrey had written a review of Southey's last poem, "Madoc," at the period of this visit, but the article had not been published. He had the courtesy and fine feeling on being invited to meet Southey to send it to him, that the poet might judge whether he would consent to make his acquaintance. "He is too much a man of the world, I believe, in spite of his poesy," says Jeffrey, "to decline seeing me after this, whatever he may think of the critic." Southey's report of the meeting is neither so dignified, nor does it make any return of generosity for this manly frankness. "I met him in good humour, being, by God's blessing, of a happy temper," Southey writes. "Having seen him, it would be impossible to be angry at anything so diminutive. We talked upon the question of taste, on which we were at issue. He is a mere child on that subject. I never met with a man whom it was so easy to checkmate." The uneasy superiority of this deliverance is one of those pettinesses which it grieves us to see a good man give way to. Wordsworth's tone, in speaking on the same subject, has the addition of his usual solemnity. "The writers in these publications," he says, "while they prosecute their inglorious employment, cannot be supposed to be in a state of mind very favourable for being affected by the finer influences of a thing so

pure as genuine poetry; and as to this instance . . . though I have not seen it, I doubt not but that it is a splenetic effusion of the conductor of that Review, who has taken a perpetual retainer from his own incapacity to plead against my claims to public approbation." Perhaps it is because we are more used to criticism nowadays, but we should not think it either dignified or decorous, whatever our private sentiments might be, to speak of our literary judges in this way. The complaint is still more out of place when the poet, like Wordsworth, professes to appeal not to the general reader, but to those specially qualified to understand. "I hope," he says of the "White Doe," "that it will be acceptable to the intelligent, *for whom alone it was written.*" To speak of the "inglorious occupation" of reviewing, the trade by which Southey got his bread, as incapacitating men for "the higher influences of poetry," was singularly unfortunate.

But though the *Edinburgh Review* shows to us, looking back upon it, no character of special truculence, nothing worse than we find and support with equanimity in much less important publications nowadays, yet it raised such commotions as no other critical journal has ever raised, and held such a place during its early years as has never been paralleled. A man might well be proud, whose foot, as it touched the ground, exploded such a brilliant and furious firework as the *English Bards and Scotch Reviewers*, to which we must refer farther on. The touch of spiteful and contemptuous rage, in that the reviewers were *Scotch*, is one of the most curious signs of the tenacity of

national sentiment. We are by no means sure that it is not in existence still.

On the other hand, the admiration of the Edinburgh circles was boundless. Mrs. Grant of Laggan, one of the most agreeable of social chroniclers, and herself a writer of some reputation, speaks of her "Arch-critic" with an enthusiasm at which probably he would have been the first to laugh. She neither approved the politics nor the metaphysics of the new periodical, but wishes that Jeffrey's "precious little essays" might be separated from the mass and bound up together. "Was there ever such a creature as Jeffrey?" she adds; "his fertility of mind, and the ease and felicity with which he clothes original and powerful thoughts in terms the most graceful and expressive, never appeared more than in his last criticism on that splendid writer, Lord Byron." Here we touch upon another chapter in the great and varied tale: but before Byron's day of vengeance Jeffrey had all but fought a duel with Moore, in consequence of an adverse article. It is almost impossible to refrain from a laugh at the idea of a poet and his critic thus meeting "upon the field of honour;" and the tendency is, we fear, exaggerated by a recollection quite unworthy historical gravity, of the very small size of both the would-be combatants.

Jeffrey soon settled into the permanent editor of the *Review*, and its representative in every way. His colleagues nearly all dispersed within a few years, and though they continued to contribute from a distance, his was always the leading and shaping influence, the

centre of its activity and reputation. Though he had a great power of wounding, and used it boldly, it cannot be said of Jeffrey that he was in any respect an ungenerous critic. Even in his unsparing condemnation of the "Lake School," and the curious literary conservatism which he united to his Liberal politics, he did a certain justice to the very objects of his castigation, finding beauty in "Thalaba," and power in the "Excursion," even though he proclaimed of the latter that "This will never do." He was wrong sometimes, no doubt, like other men; but while Southey was right in his exclamation, "Crush the 'Excursion!' he might as well think of crushing Skiddaw;" he was absurdly wrong in his estimate of Jeffrey's character, as was Wordsworth, when he said that in such an "inglorious occupation" no susceptibility to pure poetry was to be looked for. They were too near each other to be able to perceive each other's proportions and weigh their respective powers.

We cannot refrain from referring here to the sketch of Jeffrey published in the *Reminiscences* of Thomas Carlyle, which have been given to the world since the greater part of this chapter was written. It is, we think, the most real and characteristic portrait in that painful book, and in many points touched with masterly lightness and truth. Gloomily meditating on his own as yet unrevealed career, and wondering whether fate was ever to bring him to anything better than the chaos of perturbed genius and doubt and care, in which he was dwelling, Carlyle found a sort of opening into daylight and cheer-

fulness in his first encounter with the great critic. Going to his house with an introduction from one of the friends whom he had made in London, Barry Cornwall (so called), the poet, the big Annandale man with his shaggy locks and gleaming eyes, as ready to take offence as any man in Britain, found himself suddenly charmed and soothed by the genuineness, warmth, and friendliness with which he was received.

"Five pair of candles were cheerfully burning, in the light of which sat my famous little gentleman: laid aside his work, cheerfully invited me to sit, and began talking in a perfectly human manner. Our dialogue was perfectly human and successful: lasted for perhaps twenty minutes (for I could not consume a great man's time); turned upon the usual topics—what I was doing, what I had published, 'German Romance' translations my last thing, to which, I remember, he said kindly, 'We must give you a lift;' an offer which, in some complimentary way, I managed to his satisfaction to decline. My feeling with him was that of unembarrassment: a reasonable, veracious little man, I could perceive, with whom any truth one felt good to utter would have a fair chance."

This interview was followed by the appearance in the very next *Edinburgh Review* of "A little paper on Jean Paul," which was Carlyle's real introduction to the lists of literature, and showed such ready insight and prompt action on the part of the critic as might atone for many of his literary sins. "Jeffrey was by no means the supreme in criticism, or in anything else: but it is certain there has no critic appeared among us since who was worth naming beside him," adds the same incorruptible and never too gentle witness. "He was not deep enough, pious or

reverent enough to have been great in literature: but he was a man intrinsically of veracity: said nothing without meaning it to some considerable degree; had the quickest perceptions; excellent practical discernment of what lay before him." The following little picture, cut as with a diamond, of his person and appearance cannot but light up any page on which it is quoted:—

"I honestly admired him; . . . was always glad to notice him when I strolled into the courts, and eagerly enough stept up to hear him if I found him pleading: a delicate, attractive, dainty, little figure, as he merely walked about, much more if he were speaking: uncommonly bright black eyes, instinct with vivacity, intelligence, and kindly fire: roundish brow, delicate oval face, full of rapid expression; figure light, nimble, though so small. He had his gown, almost never any wig, wore his black hair closely cropt. I have seen the back part of it suddenly jerk out in some of the rapid expressions of his face, and knew, even if behind him, that his brow was then puckered, and his eyes looking archly, half contemptuously out in conformity to some conclusive little cut his tongue was giving. His voice, clear, harmonious, and sonorous, had something of metallic in it, something almost plangent: never rose into alt, into any dissonance or shrillness, nor carried much the character of humour, though a fine feeling of the ludicrous always dwelt in him—as you could notice best when he got into Scotch dialect, and gave you, with admirable truth of mimicry, old Edinburgh incidents and experiences of his."

Long years after this, if the writer may be permitted a personal note, when she had put forth into the world, in all the inexperience of extreme youth, a modest little novel, this great critic and prince in literature took the trouble to write to the unknown novice, of whose very name he was ignorant, a letter

full of the most delicate criticism and fatherly commendation. This was only a few weeks before his death, and the hand was already tremulous with weakness which bade the new-comer welcome.

Such was the man of whom it must be allowed that he created a new power in literature, howsoever we may rate for good or evil his exercise of it. A curious volume lately published, containing the correspondence of Mr. Macvey Napier, has thrown a strange and amusing light upon the art of editing, as employed upon this same *Edinburgh Review* in its later stages. Amusing, however, as it may be to the reader, it must have had a very different effect upon the harassed and anxious head of the band, with so many different minds to keep in harmony. All this Jeffrey bore "lightly as a flower," with unfailing vivacity, and that readiness to throw himself into the middle of the fray, and make up all deficiencies, which is so essential to the leaders of periodical literature. And it must be remembered that the enterprise was new, in every sense of the word, an experiment in "the trade" as well as in letters. The group of friends met, with a certain secrecy, "in a dingy room off Willison's printing-office, in Craig's Close," to read over the proofs of their articles, with mutual criticism, and no doubt a great deal of that mutual admiration which keeps such groups together. "Smith was by far the most timid of the confederacy, and believed that unless our *incognito* was strictly maintained, we could not go on a day. And this was his object in making us hold our dark divans at

Willison's office, to which he insisted on our repairing singly, and by back approaches or by different lanes!" This was a remnant of the old belief in the *genus irritabile*, the old canons of revenge for criticism, which the *Edinburgh* was the instrument of finally destroying, by making criticism an institution in the literary world: but it is curious to identify so outspoken, and apparently fearless a nature as that of Sydney Smith, an Englishman *par excellence*, as the originator of these mysterious precautions. Thus obstinate anonymity, also, made it difficult for all but the inner circle to discover who was the author of a more than usually brilliant and telling article, and thus was supposed to add to the interest of the public. The principle lingers still in some regions, and specially in the only great literary organ which still has its headquarters in Edinburgh. In our own days, a different canon has begun to be supreme; but we cannot help reverting with approval to the earlier idea. It is true that in the chief circles of literature there is never any great uncertainty as to whose is the hand that administers chastisement, but we believe that criticism is always most free, both for praise or blame, when it is anonymous, and that the verdict of an important publication, whether it be review as in those days, or newspaper as in our own, is more telling as well as more dignified than that of an individual, whose opinion, in nine cases out of ten, becomes of inferior importance to us the moment we are acquainted with his name.

But it is very curious and amusing to call up

before us this scene, so oddly at variance with all the aims and objects of the innocent conspiracy, yet so entirely in keeping with external circumstances. We might search all Europe through, without finding so fit a background for the meeting of a band of secret plotters. The dark and stately street, dimly lighted with the picturesque twinkle of smoky lamps; a blue lane of wintry sky above, broken by all the lofty gables and turrets half as high as heaven; and far down below, amid all the confused crowd of life, now and then a furtive figure, little Jeffrey, light and rapid, skimming along the pavement, young Brougham with lanky limbs and nose in the air, and Smith, plump and pleasant, he of all the rest the least congenial to the scene. To see them dive and disappear into the dark entry "by different approaches," though perhaps they had strolled out of the Parliament House arm in arm ten minutes before, must have been as odd a sight as any that curious age presented. The other scene in which the new editor appeared about the same time, the drill-meetings of the Edinburgh volunteer bands, labouring enthusiastically by the smoky lamplight after the work of the day was over at their manual exercise, with this same little Jeffrey among the most awkward of the awkward squad—is not more ludicrously unlike the entire tendency of his life and work. When the conspirators of the *Review* arrived at "the dingy room" in which their pernicious plots were to be discussed, a remnant of boyish frolic and amusement in the masquerading tempered their sense of its absurdity; but, indeed, to behold the high-

coloured resentments, and to hear the pathetic complaints, of the literary classes generally, out of Edinburgh, it would be natural to imagine that this group of young men, in their official white ties, were really executioners of the most bloody and unscrupulous kind.

There was, however, something more than a romance of literature in the new undertaking. "The three first numbers were *given* to the publisher," says Lord Jeffrey, "he taking the risk and defraying the charges." "For the first two or three numbers," Lord Cockburn adds, "they had an idea that such a work could be carried on without remunerating the writers at all. It was to be all gentlemen and no pay." This, however, was soon perceived to be an impossible notion, since the work of the *Review* inevitably took up more of the time of the contributors than they could afford, after the first outburst of zeal and excitement, to give. The principle of the new publication had been to keep it "quite independent of the booksellers," a literary, and not a "trade" undertaking; and hitherto no publisher had been found with a sufficiently elevated idea of literature, or sense of the transformations going on in it, to make such an attempt practicable. Now, however, as usually happens at a great crisis, a man was found to answer the requirements of the time. "Mr. Constable," says Lord Cockburn, "though unfortunate in the end, was the most spirited bookseller that had ever appeared in Scotland. . . . Till he appeared, our publishing trade was at nearly the lowest ebb, partly because there was

neither population nor independence to produce, or to require, a vigorous publisher. . . . He rushed out and took possession of the open field, as if he had been aware from the first of the existence of the latent spirits which a skilful conjuror might call from the depths of the population to the exercise of literature." When the first few numbers of the *Review* had been published, with a success which, no doubt, had much influence in opening the eyes of this intelligent bookseller to the advantages of making such a profitable undertaking permanent, he consulted Sydney Smith as to the terms on which that could be secured. Smith's advice, that ten guineas a sheet should be paid to the contributors, and two hundred a year to the editor, seems to us a very moderate estimate. But these terms were pronounced by Mr. Longman, who shared the risk, to be "without precedent." The difference between literary remuneration such as this, and the present rate, is, we may believe with gratitude, in no small degree the work of the *Edinburgh Review* and the standard it established.

The position of editor was offered to Jeffrey, evidently the person best qualified for its duties. Sydney Smith had taken a sort of responsibility for the first number, and the others had apparently edited themselves in the conspirators' chamber in Craig's Close, where, no doubt, by this time Jeffrey's alert and vivacious intellect had already shown its harmonising power. But it is curious to see how he balances the question whether he ought or ought not to accept the appointment with a fear of doing something beneath

his dignity by accepting pay for his literary services, which is very bewildering. "I will confess," he says, writing to Horner in London, "that I am disposed to accept it. . . . £300 is a monstrous bribe to a man in my position. . . . It will be long before I make £300 more than I do now by my profession, and by far the greater part of the employment I have will remain with me, I know, in spite of anything of this sort. . . . But what influences me the most is, that I engaged in it at first gratuitously along with a set of men whose character and situation in life must command the respect of the multitude, and that I hope to go on with it as a matter of emolument along with the same associates. All the members will take their ten guineas, I find, and under the sanction of that example I think I may take my editor's salary also, without being supposed to have suffered any degradation. . . . I would undoubtedly prefer making the same sum by my profession, but I really want the money, and think that I may take it in this way without compromising either my honour or my future interest. Tell me fairly what you think of it." These scruples strike us as extraordinarily unlikely to affect any man, even of the most susceptible delicacy, nowadays. The letter ends, however, with an entreaty to Horner, who was evidently very remiss about his own contributions, and kept the authorities of the new *Review* in constant trouble, to "enquire and look about among the literary men and professed writers of the metropolis, and send us down a list of a few that you think worth ten guineas a sheet, and that will

work conscientiously for the money." Thus, though there were still hesitations as to putting off the gentleman amateur, and executing literary work for money, the position seems to have gradually settled itself. We may add, before leaving this important literary incident, Jeffrey's own list of contributors, furnished to his brother in America:—

"I do not think you know any of my associates. There is the sage Horner, however, whom you have seen, and who has gone to the English bar with the resolution of being Lord Chancellor; Brougham, a great mathematician, who has just published a book upon the Colonial Policy of Europe, which all you Americans should read; Rev. Sydney Smith and P. Elmsley, two learned Oxonian priests, full of jokes and erudition; my excellent little Sanskrit Hamilton; Thomas Thomson and John Murray, two ingenious advocates; and some dozen of occasional contributors, among whom the most illustrious, I think, are young Watt of Birmingham, and Davy of the Royal Institution. We sell 2500 copies already, and hope to do double in six months, if we are puffed enough."

Among these contributors appeared also, and so early as the fifth number, a lame young advocate, on the sunnier side of the Parliament House and political favour, already Sheriff-Depute of Selkirkshire, and the author of some collections and translations of poetry —decidedly one of the rising men of his day, though in no greater or more perceptible degree than many of the others round him—to wit, Walter Scott, of whom in another place there is a great deal more to be said. His first contribution was a review of Southey's translation of "Amadis of Gaul," a subject most congenial to a mind so eagerly bent upon re-

discovering the forgotten glories of the past, and to which mediæval romance was the dearest of all studies. His contributions were but few, and his support was withdrawn when his own party established its separate organ some time after. But he seems always to have maintained kind relations with his fellow townsmen and schoolfellows. He was engaged at the time in collecting materials for his *Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border*, the first work (with the exception of several translations from the German) in which he had appeared before the public. It was received with much commendation by Jeffrey in the second number of the *Review*.

When the *Edinburgh* had sailed on in full empire over the changeable atmosphere of public opinion for half-a-dozen years, a rival arose to disturb its undisputed sway. Its only competitors hitherto had been the comparatively trifling little "Monthly Reviews" and "Critical Reviews," which once made the bosoms of authors flutter, but which had fallen into insignificance, though Southey and William Taylor, and many other respectable writers, did what they could, with next to no pay and very little encouragement, to keep them up. The fresh and unhackneyed band of non-professional writers in Edinburgh, with no flavour of Grub Street about them, and almost haughtily independent of "the booksellers," had taken at once a position very much above these old organs. None of them could hold their own against this robust innovator from the North. But it was not till six years after the vigorous birth of the *Edinburgh* that the other party

in politics set up their rival review, the *Quarterly*. It was not without misgivings that Jeffrey contemplated this rival; perhaps, also, with a little remorseful consciousness that he had himself gone a little too far in politics and provoked it. "Tell me what you hear and what you think of this new *Quarterly*," he writes to Horner; "and do not let yourself imagine that I feel any unworthy jealousy, and still less any unworthy fear, on the occasion. . . . I do rejoice at the prospect of this kind of literature, which seems to be more and more attended to than any other, being generally improved in quality, and shall be proud to have set an example." As it happened, the rivalry quickened the strain of intellect in both publications, and the public demand for this species of literature, which had been almost created by the first review, was now sufficiently widened to support two. It took away Scott from the Liberal fraternity, to which he had belonged more or less, notwithstanding his different politics, and it naturally made a great difference in the position of the hitherto unique Review: but the beginning of the *Quarterly* was attended by none of the romance which distinguished the other. It was not a raid of inexperienced and unremunerated champions like the big literary frolic which had grown into so serious a business; but, on the contrary, was a straightforward literary enterprise from the beginning, to support certain views and fill a definite place. The interest must always remain with those who leaped into the arena first, and ventured so much upon an untried principle. The *Quarterly*

began with several distinguished contributors, among whom was Southey. The brilliant and caustic intellect of Lockhart soon became its guiding influence; but it was first committed into the hands of a critic of the old school, a man without either the liberal breeding or larger spirit which became such an enterprise—Gifford of the "Baviad" and "Mæviad," already referred to, who had manipulated the *Anti-Jacobin*, and who was the complete impersonation of a literary hack, ready for any job that might turn up. We may add, to show the difference between the management of this somewhat spiteful and petty personage, so long as it lasted, and the fine instincts of Jeffrey, Charles Lamb's pathetic account of the misfortune that befell him in the new review. He had been entrusted by Southey's mediation with Wordsworth's new poem to review. It had been, as everybody then thought, cruelly treated by Jeffrey, the critic whose "inglorious occupation" made him incapable of appreciating anything so pure as such poetry, according to Wordsworth's own deliverance. Naturally his friend Lamb was eager to do his best for the poet to whom he and all his brotherhood looked up with generous respect and admiration. On his own account, too, Lamb was excited about the article. "It is the first review I ever did," he writes, nervous, but pleased with himself and his production. When, however, the Review appeared with his paper in it, he thus writes to Wordsworth in all the heat of his first disappointment and disgust:—

"I told you my review was a very imperfect one; but what

you will see in the *Quarterly* is a spurious one, which Mr. Baviad Gifford has palmed upon it for mine. I never felt more vexed in my life than when I read it. I cannot give you an idea of what he has done to it out of spite at me. The *language* he has altered throughout. Whatever inadequateness it had to its subject, it was in point of composition the prettiest piece of prose I ever wrote; and so my sister (to whom alone I read the MSS.) said. That charm, if it had any, is gone; more than a third of the substance is cut away, and that not all from one place but *passim*, so as to make utter nonsense. Every warm expression is changed for a nasty cold one. I have not the cursed alterations by me; I shall never look at it again. . . . But that would have been little, putting his shoemaker phraseology (for he was a shoemaker) instead of mine, which has been trusted by better authors than his ignorance can comprehend—for I reckon myself a *dab* at prose; verse I leave to my betters. God help them if they are to be so reviewed by friend or foe as you have been this quarter—I have read 'It won't do'—But worse than altering words, he has kept a few numbers only of the part I had done best. . . . I know how sore a word altered makes me; but, indeed, of this review the whole complexion is gone. I regret only that I did not keep a copy. I am sure you would have been pleased with it; because I had been feeding my fancy for months past with the notion of pleasing you. . . . I read it at Archie's shop with my face burning with vexation, with just such a feeling as if it had been a review written against myself, making false quotations from me. . . . But I could not but protest against your taking that thing as mine. Every pretty expression (I know there were many), every warm expression (there was nothing else), is vulgarised and frozen. If they catch me in their camp again, let them spitchcock me! They had a right to do it, as no name appears to it; and Mr. Shoemaker Gifford, I suppose, never waived a right he had since he commenced author. Heaven confound him and all caitiffs!"

When both these reviews had become respectable in point of age, and thoroughly established in their reign over the literary opinions of England, another

periodical suddenly burst into the field with an energy and brilliant vigour, a romantic ardour and temerity, which deserved the alarm and resentment, and all the hot words usually employed in respect to the *Edinburgh Review* much more than that periodical itself. This new and startling competitor for public favour arose also among those supposedly canny and cautious Scots, whose conventional reputation as decorous and prudent has never suffered in the general from these remarkable exceptions to it. The originator in this case was no brotherhood of eager young writers anxious to flesh their maiden swords upon all possible adversaries, and set the world in a turmoil; but one long-headed and far-sighted man, without any literary genius of his own, but with an insight which has become hereditary in his family. William Blackwood, an Edinburgh bookseller, of no great standing at the time, became the publisher of an insignificant *Edinburgh Magazine* in the beginning of 1817, under the auspices of two writers whose names have faded out of recollection, though one of them, Thomas Pringle, was the author of some pleasant verses, full of that tender and simple patriotism which is so often the inspiration of the native Scottish poet, and which still hold a place in school reading-books and collections of poetry. A short time, however, was enough to show that these mild members of the literary profession were little qualified to work with, much less to overmaster, the strong and active mind of the publisher into whose hands they had fallen. They were impressed with a full sense of their own consequence as literary men, as

independent as Jeffrey himself, then the autocrat of literature; while he, on the other hand, with an exceptionally acute and vigorous mind of his own, and determined to "make a spoon or spoil a horn," had little idea of restricting himself to the ordinary passive part allotted to the "bookseller" in the somewhat contemptuous jargon of the day. In six months, accordingly, there was a split between the two quite unharmonious elements. Mr. Blackwood took personal possession of the *Magazine*, which already bore his name, and decorum and dulness departed with the two deposed editors. The first number under the new *régime* is reckoned as No. 7 in the *Magazine;* but no such easy mark of the change of management is necessary to distinguish between the feeble commonplace of the one series and the daring and breakneck vehemence of the other. The new supporters whom the enterprising publisher called to his aid were once more a group of young men, chiefly young advocates, like those of the *Edinburgh Review*, but on the other side of politics, and in themselves more brilliant, more reckless, more adventurous, than their predecessors.

This venture altogether was more exciting and daring than that which Jeffrey and his band had launched fifteen years before. The stately review came but four times in a year, appearing at intervals which left abundant time for its production; but a monthly magazine was a greater strain upon the resources, both mental and commercial, of its originators. The first number of the newly organised *Magazine* burst upon the world like a thunderbolt. It contained

the most savage onslaught that had yet been made upon the Lake School in the person of Coleridge; and a wild attack, at the same time, upon another new order of poets, boldly branded (though in this Southey had taken the lead) as the Cockney School, and impersonated in the (poetically) harmless person of Leigh Hunt. But these papers, though striking enough, and full of the keen and sharp personalities which pleased and excited the age, were as nothing in comparison with a third, the joint production of all the young, furious, and frolicsome band, the extraordinary article known as "The Chaldee Manuscript." No fugitive publication, perhaps, was ever more talked of, or so generally known. It concerned the inhabitants of Edinburgh alone, and was so full of local allusions as to be fully comprehensible to them only; yet such was the audacious wit, and such the boldness of the attack, that it stirred the air far beyond Edinburgh, and penetrated into all the echoes. Professing to be a lost manuscript recently discovered, this brilliant hoax conveyed, in the most perfect copy of biblical language, an allegorical representation of the conflict between the former editors and the present; aided on one side by Jeffrey and all his Whiggish host, and on the other by a new brotherhood of critics, suddenly revealed in the interest of the publisher. There was nothing actually profane in its meaning; but the admirably imitated style made it appear so to many readers, whose delight in a mystification so congenial to the taste of the time was rather enhanced than lessened by their horror at

the form it took. The gratification of the eager Edinburgh audience, which comprehended all its allusions and could identify every individual named, was intense, and the commotion it created indescribable. "The town is in an uproar about the Chaldee manuscript in *Blackwood's Magazine*, which contains, in a very irreverent and unjustifiable form, a great deal of wit and cutting satire," writes Mrs. Grant. . . . "Jeffrey is the Bonaparte of literature here; and, I think, this confederacy of petulant young men seem encouraged to attack him by the fate of his prototype." Jeffrey himself had been a petulant young man, slinging his stones right and left so short a time before, that his position as the victim of this assault, which was too figurative to be deeply offensive, could scarcely call forth any vehement sympathy. But a more audacious gage of battle to all and sundry, and defiance to the world in general, could not have been delivered. The notables of Edinburgh must have followed each line with a tremor of excitement lest they themselves should be the next assailed. It is impossible not to feel now, when all this ferment of fire and fury has so long sunk into forgetfulness, that to expend so much force and talent upon a petty quarrel and local vengeance was a sad waste of energy; but that is never the feeling, at the time, of the actual combatants in such a fray.

It is not in our power, even were it of sufficient interest to the reader, to trace out the different characters so boldly assailed. Some, however, of the combatants on the Blackwood side, the new

group of critics, are identified in a few lines: "The first that came was in the likeness of the beautiful leopard from the valley of the palm-trees, whose going forth was comely as the greyhound, and his eye like lightning of fiery flame. . . . There came also from a far country the scorpion, which delighteth to sting the faces of men." The two men thus characterised played a large part in the literary history of their time. The first, John Wilson, is almost entirely identified with the daring periodical, in which his great powers became first known. The other, John Gibson Lockhart, though with less genius, occupied a wider sphere. Before, however, we pass on to these two remarkable figures, and to the other members of the band, we must return to point out the individuality, not less remarkable, of the founder of the undertaking. The rush of prodigal energy with which these young writers took possession of the world's attention, had consequences which came less sharply upon themselves than on the important but homely personage who stood behind them. Their pranks were such as carried the public by assault; yet the assault was not only dauntless and brilliant in the highest degree, but often insolent and violent: a sort of Berserker rage was upon them, and the power of being able to give forth any wild impertinence they pleased seems to have partially turned their heads. But it is curious beyond measure to see the wary and keen man of business, the astute publisher-editor behind these riotous spirits, holding them in an invisible leash, yet, with bold calculation, allowing them to go to the very

verge of the impossible, to endanger his purse and risk his venture, just shaving the hem and thin edge between ruin and victory. Had this license gone a hair's-breadth farther, *Blackwood's Magazine* would probably have been a six months' wonder, and ended in a crowd of prosecutions for libel, or perhaps in horsewhippings and duels, which were the wilder fashions of the day. But by some instinct which is incommunicable, and as capricious as genius itself, the daring but unseen guide divined the limit. He was aware that

> "Desperate valour oft made good
> Even by its daring venture rude,
> Where prudence might have failed."

There can be no doubt that the onslaught, with all its indecorous force, accomplished what a more orderly and serious beginning would have failed to do.

It is now time to put before the reader the Tory side of the "petulant young men" who had thus for a second time turned society upside down. The "leopard" of the Chaldee was John Wilson, one of the most notable figures of modern literature. A more extraordinary contrast to the small, vivacious Jeffrey than this fine athlete, with his splendid person and marvellous gifts, his arm as strong in the fray with any gigantic tramp or gipsy that defied him, as with the helpless writer who could only writhe and shriek for vengeance in his grasp, his "front like Jove," and his emancipation from all rule, could scarcely be. At this period, Wilson was a very type of strength, prosperity, and happiness. He had got all that was best in the differing educations of the

two countries—in Glasgow, its philosophy and literature; in Oxford, its classics and its society. He had lived for years in the Lake District, and had even come to be considered one of the lesser members of the "Lake School." In Edinburgh he was received with all the warmth which a little poetical fame was calculated to add to the natural welcome given to a handsome, rich, amusing, and delightful stranger, with a pretty wife, and everything well authenticated and honourable about him. "He is young, handsome, wealthy, witty," says Mrs. Grant, "has great learning, exuberant spirits, a wife and children that he doats on, and no sin that I know, but on the contrary, virtuous principles and feelings. Yet his wonderful eccentricity would put anybody but his wife wild."

Wilson was at this time the author of two poems, the "Isle of Palms" and the "City of the Plague," in which fine-drawn sentiment and an over-wealth of conception and poetic diction were more conspicuous than genius. From these early productions, and from the sickly sweetness and sentimentality of the tales and romances of his later years, the "Lights and Shadows of Scottish Life," etc., the reader would form very little idea of the real wealth and faculty of the man,—the exuberant genius which for so many years poured forth lavish floods of wit and wisdom, of frolic and song, of the gayest banter and the finest criticism, in the pages of the magazine of which he was the chief and most lasting inspiration. The *Noctes Ambrosiànæ* is not, unfortunately, a work of the

kind which could be expected to last. The highest genius could scarcely put immortality into these records of the moment—and not only of the moment but of the convivial moments of a life by no means strait-laced, and of which it was his fancy to exaggerate the license tenfold in description. Whether Wilson counted the cost, and soberly chose to produce a supreme blaze of effect in his lifetime rather than to leave anything for posterity, we cannot tell. Perhaps it may be said that sober calculation was not in him; but it is very possible, we think, that, consciously or unconsciously, he may have made some such bargain with himself and fame. Whoever will attempt now to read the *Noctes* will find in them the outpouring of such an abundant and exuberant soul as has rarely flowed forth with equal *abandon* in literature. Here and there he will be touched by passages which are lyrical in their wonderful flow and rhythm, though they never abandon the form of prose, by descriptions full of the most brilliant life and colour, and always by a medley of passion and criticism, tenderness and laughter, which is unique, and has no rival. The mixture, no doubt, has poorer elements, chief of which is the ever-present spice of locality and personality, which impairs the enjoyment of those who know neither the place nor the individuals, and is very apt to disgust an impatient reader. But even with these drawbacks, the attempt to understand the *Noctes* is worth making. To place all these generous utterances of a big heart and teeming brain in the atmosphere, even of the most refined

of taverns (which "Ambrose's" does not pretend to be), is not so much a mistake in art as the most wasteful discounting, so to speak, of the author's reputation: but this very familiarity of illustration made the effect prodigious at the time.

There is something more, however, in the *Noctes* than even the eloquence and the poetry — there is at least one character which raises the curious living record of so many quickly-passing moments to the height of a drama. The other characters introduced are dim enough, but the Shepherd is one of the most delightful impersonations of tender Scotch humour that ever was created. How much he really resembled the rude yet wonderful peasant, uncultivated, uninstructed, and with his coarse homespun often enough appearing under the ideal Shepherd's maud that veiled him, but withal with a delicate vein of poetry running through his coarser metal, cannot now be ascertained. The Ettrick Shepherd in himself is very worthy of notice, and some small portion of the poetry he produced has a real touch of the divine, and is worthy of a place among the poetry which the world will not let die; but the Shepherd in the *Noctes* is much greater than his prototype. When Wilson was at his finest, when the stream of his boundless eloquence was at its purest, it was through the lips of the Shepherd that he spoke. If he leaves here and there an alloy of vanity, a touch of folly, in the being whom he manipulates so lovingly, it is no more than enough to make it credible that James Hogg, glorified by the

touch of a genius superior to his own, but still James Hogg, in real flesh and blood, might have sat for the portrait. An attempt has been made recently, by a well-qualified hand, to detach from all superfluous matter what has been called the "Comedy of the Noctes;" but we doubt whether readers in any quantity will ever attempt to thread the long-drawn mazes, and go masquerading into the abodes of a worn-out fashion of life, too recent to be picturesque, too far off to be sympathetic. And apart from the *Noctes* Wilson cannot be fully known; though the wonderful wealth of his criticism and the sports and descriptions of Christopher North will give a far better idea of his character than either the poetry or the romantic and sentimental fiction which he has left behind him. After all the others had faded, —when Scott was gone, and little Jeffrey, and even the great preacher Chalmers, who divided the suffrages of the city with them,—Wilson still remained, the last great relic of that tide of intellectual power which had swept over Edinburgh. Loosely clad and largely made, with flowing locks and a majestic presence, his recollection is still fresh in the minds of many. But this recollection has carried us far beyond our immediate theme.

The "scorpion who delighteth to sting the faces of men" was John Gibson Lockhart, the future son-in-law of Scott, and for a long time after a power in literature. The description here given of him is sufficiently candid, supplied as it was by a friendly hand, and it proves that keen and bitter wit was even then

allowed to be his most striking characteristic. It is curious that a man with so many qualities, who proved himself afterwards in his *Life of Scott* so capable of truly comprehending real moral excellence, and in some of his novels so sensible of many of the most tragic emotions of the mind, should impress his associates chiefly with those stinging powers. He was a contributor to the new *Magazine* for a number of years, until he was transplanted to London and became the editor of the *Quarterly Review*. His novels have not kept much hold upon the public mind, but they are none of them without merit. *Valerius* is one of the most successful of the two or three studies of the life of the early Christians in Rome which have appeared from time to time; and the very curious, tragic, and painful book called *Adam Blair* is one that nobody who has read it will easily forget.

The Ettrick Shepherd, to whom we have already referred as, in his glorified conception, the hero of Wilson's great work, was a diffuse and unequal writer, but is remembered chiefly as the author of a most delicate and visionary piece of verse much unlike his rustic personality and the general level of his productions. The description of "Bonnie Kilmeny," from the "Queen's Wake," a poem full of fine passages, of which this is the especial gem, is quoted in every collection of poetry, and it seems unnecessary to repeat it here. It is by far the highest note that Hogg ever attained. Whether he had actually any share in the production of the new *Magazine* it is difficult to say, since Wilson has so connected him with its history as

to make it impossible to sever him from the band of writers who brought it forth. Other names of more note and influence than that of the Shepherd figure in the list. Sir William Hamilton, the future philosopher, was present at the uproarious sitting during which the Chaldee Manuscript was produced, and composed one of the verses so much to his own satisfaction as to fall from his chair exhausted with laughter after the exertion. Thus Edinburgh was once more the scene of one of the great events of modern literary history. All the magazines of more recent days are the followers and offspring of this periodical, so audacious in its beginning, so persistent and permanent in its influence and power.

The success of the new organ of opinion was immediate. "Four thousand of this cruelly witty magazine," writes Mrs. Grant, "are sold in a month, at which I do in wonderment abound, as a great many are sold in London, where, I should suppose, our localities could be little understood, and certainly nothing could be more local. . . . It is supported by a club of young wits, many of whom are well known to me; who, I hope, in some measure fear God, but certainly do not regard man."

It is curious, however, to find that upon the vexed question of the time—the poetry of Wordsworth and Coleridge,—the new *Magazine*, though its chief contributor had been supposed to belong to the "Lake School" of poets, was in no respect more clear-sighted or more liberal than Jeffrey, their arch-enemy, had been. The assault upon Coleridge in the first number

is far more fiery and furious than anything Jeffrey ever wrote; and the series of articles which followed upon Leigh Hunt and the "Cockney School" embody a literary mistake as grievous as was ever committed. "I propose," says the contemptuous critic, addressing Leigh Hunt by name, "to relieve my main attack upon you by a diversion against some of your younger and less-important auxiliaries — the Keatses, the Shelleys, and the Webbes." For a magazine which shortly afterwards treated with judicial dignity the shortcomings and blunders of Jeffrey, this slip was terrible enough. In after days, however, Wilson's delicate and enthusiastic criticism did much to gain for Wordsworth the popular appreciation which was so slow to come.

WILLIAM GIFFORD, born 1756; died 1826.

Published The Baviad, 1794.
The Mæviad, 1795.
Edited The Anti-Jacobin, 1797-98.
Quarterly Review, 1808 to 1824.

GEORGE CANNING, born 1770; died 1827.

Published little except the poetry in the Anti-Jacobin.

JOHN HOOKHAM FRERE, born 1769; died 1846.

Published Poetry of the Anti-Jacobin.
Whistlecraft (Prospectus and Specimen of our intended National work), 1817.
Metrical Translation of the "Birds" and "Acharnians" of Aristophanes.

FRANCIS JEFFREY, born 1773; died 1850.

Editor of the Edinburgh Review from 1803 to 1829, in which innumerable critical articles were published; afterwards collected in four vols., 1824.

SYDNEY SMITH, born 1771; died 1845.

Published Contributions to Edinburgh Review, from 1802.
Peter Plymley's Letters, 1807.
Various political pamphlets.

HENRY BROUGHAM, born 1778; died 1868.

Published Mathematical and Scientific Papers, 1796-1798.
Inquiry into Colonial Policy, 1803.
Discourses on Paley's Natural Theology, 1835.
Memoirs of the Statesmen of the Reign of George III., 1839-1843.
Lives of Men of Letters and Science, 1840.
Political Philosophy, 1840.
Analytical View of Newton's *Principia*, 1855.
Speeches, Collected, etc. etc.
His own Life and Times (incomplete), 1871.

JOHN WILSON, born 1785; died 1854.

Published Isle of Palms, 1812.
City of the Plague, 1816.
Lights and Shadows of Scottish Life, 1822.
(Several of these were originally published in *Blackwood's Magazine.*)
The Trials of Margaret Lyndsay, 1823.
The Foresters, 1824.
The Recreations of Christopher North, 1842.

He was the chief contributor to (though never editor of) *Blackwood's Magazine*, from 1817 almost to the end of his life.

JOHN GIBSON LOCKHART, born 1794; died 1854.

Published Valerius: A Roman Story, 1821.
Adam Blair, 1822.
Reginald Dalton, 1823.
Matthew Wald, 1824.
Life of Scott, 1837-38.

He contributed to *Blackwood's Magazine* from its beginning, and became editor of the *Quarterly Review* in 1824.

JAMES HOGG, the Ettrick Shepherd, born 1770; died 1835.

Published Poems (chiefly songs), 1801.
The Mountain Bard, 1807.
The Forest Minstrel, 1810.
The Queen's Wake, 1813.
Also a great number of short poems and tales at various dates.

CHAPTER III.

WALTER SCOTT.

WHILE the young men of the *Edinburgh Review* were setting out upon their bold enterprise from the neglected side of the Parliament House, and avenging their Whiggery, oddly enough, not upon its opponents, but upon the poets of their own party, another young advocate in Edinburgh belonging to the other side was slowly becoming known among his peers as possessing abilities beyond the common level, though no such brilliancy as that which flashed out, in sight of all the world, in the great *Review*. Walter Scott was the son of an Edinburgh Writer to the Signet, a respectable Scotch lawyer—with a traceable descent from the Scotts of Harden, and all the advantage of known and honourable connections; but he was no better off than his contemporaries, except in so far that he had a fair prospect of the rewards and encouragements then exclusively appropriated by his party in politics. He had been brought up, like all the rest, at the High School, after a dreamy and delightful childhood, chiefly spent in the country, where unconsciously he must have taken into his heart that world of rural life, with all its sights and sounds, the ewe-milkers,

the farm labourers, the peasant race which no one has ever understood more completely; and at the same time all the traditions and ballads that floated about the countryside—a lore as then neither prized nor chronicled, but dear to every fresh youthful spirit, and doubly dear to the boy whose ancestors had figured in the stirring dramas of the Border, and whose life was to be influenced throughout by their inspiration. Permitted as a child, by a partially invalid condition, the privilege of constant reading, he had called himself a "virtuoso" at a very early age, and claimed kindred with other readers and thinkers, to the great amusement of his family. At school, however, not even his lameness kept him back from a vigorous share in all the sports and frays of his comrades; and though the poetical side of his character was visible in many an hour of youthful leisure, it was not of a kind to obtrude itself upon the general eye. It revealed itself in summer holidays, when he would climb, with a cherished friend and a book, high up among the cliffs of Arthur's Seat, and there, seated in a mossy corner, read the long evening through, while the light of the northern day lingered over the wide landscape. "He read faster than I," says the companion of these silent hours, "and had on this account to wait a little at finishing every two pages before turning the leaf." What thoughts must have been in the young reader's mind as he "waited a little" while his slower comrade plodded on—and lifting his young eyes with all the light of genius in them, looked abroad, still with the fumes of the poetry

in his head, over that wonderful landscape, the most picturesque of cities at his feet, the soft steeps of St. Leonard's close at hand, and far away the blue distant Firth with its islands, and the low hills of Fife.

> "Where's the coward that would not dare
> To fight for such a land?"—

these very words, one can imagine, must have been in his mind as he lay on the grass, with all the confused delicious dreams of a young fancy floating in his mind, and some vague previsions, who can doubt, of the wonders to come? It was not Jeffrey, we may be sure, or any other intellectualist, who accompanied young Walter on those lingering summer evenings, and laboured after him page by page; but there is no scene in his youthful life more delightful to contemplate than this, in which, as in Coleridge's most lovely poem, "All influences of soul and sense" mingle—the breathless pause in the reading, which was Spenser perhaps, the survivor remembers, or the Decameron—

> "The music and the doleful tale,
> The rich and balmy eve"—

and that scene in which the charm of natural beauty and grandeur combined with the passionate and visionary patriotism of youth.

Scott has been called a dunce at school, but this, he is himself careful to point out, was not the case. "For myself," he says, "I glanced like a meteor from one end of the class to the other, and commonly disgusted my kind master as much by negligence and

frivolity, as I occasionally pleased him by flashes of intellect and talent." He was already the storyteller of the little community; and "in the winter play-hours, when hard exercise was impossible, my tales used to assemble an admiring audience round Lucky Brown's fireside: and happy was he that could sit next to the inexhaustible narrator." When he was fifteen he saw Burns—a wonderful incident in his life; and in return for a piece of information which nobody else knew, the name of a little known author, received a kind word and a glance from those eyes, which were like no eyes he had ever seen in any mortal head, as he afterwards recorded. At a later period he is supposed to have received from another hand a mystic touch in the dark which made him a poet. This was conveyed to him by Mrs. Barbauld, who had brought with her on a visit to Edinburgh the translation of Bürger's *Lenore*, which William Taylor of Norwich, one of the first to open up the mysteries of German literature to the English reader, had lately written; the lady read this to Dugald Stewart—who, on his side, repeated as much of it as he could remember in the hearing of young Scott. The fragment, as recollected by the popular and beloved professor, and especially the two vigorous lines—

> "Tramp, tramp! across the land we go;
> Splash, splash! across the sea,"

struck Scott's imagination greatly. "This, madam," he is reported to have said long afterwards to a member of the Norwich circle which worshipped Taylor, "was what made me a poet. I had several times attempted the

more regular kind of poetry without success, but here was something that I thought I could do." This is a curious statement from a man whose head was full of every kind of stirring ballad. But there was apparently so much truth in it that it set him, as soon as he was sufficiently acquainted with German, to make a translation of his own of the same poem, retaining Taylor's lines; which he printed, by way, apparently, of helping him on in an unfortunate youthful attachment when he was about twenty-one, and which was received with some favour by his friends, if it did not do much for him with his love. Soon after he translated Goethe's *Goetz von Berlichingen*, a work, we humbly opine, not much worth the trouble of either author or translator, and executed some other little performances of the same kind for that curious little fictitious poet and personage Matthew Gregory Lewis, usually called Monk Lewis. These latter productions had the effect of bringing out into the light a man whose name was henceforward associated with Scott's for good and for evil during almost all his after life—that of the printer, James Ballantyne. Ballantyne had been Scott's schoolfellow in one of the early preparatory schools he had attended in his childhood. He was, in 1779, after some attempts to establish himself in a better position which had failed, the printer and editor of a weekly newspaper in Kelso, his native town. Scott furnished him with some bits of news for his paper on one occasion when he was visiting in the neighbourhood, and showed him some of his contributions

to Lewis's intended volume: and when their childish intercourse was thus renewed, his kind heart prompted him, by way of encouraging his old acquaintance, to have a few copies of the poems printed, in order that Ballantyne's skill as a printer, and his excellent type, might be seen in Edinburgh. Twelve copies were printed of this little experimental effort, and Ballantyne's fate was decided. The alliance was productive of many consequences to both—fame and extraordinary success, and luxury, and wealth for a time—but it would have been well for Scott had his brotherly kindness been less genial. Had the rash publisher been left to vegetate in his little town and print his newspaper, it might have been better for all concerned.

In the end of the century Scott married a pretty and charming girl, half French, half English, who does not seem to have counted for very much in his life, but who was a pleasant mate and brought him an undistinguished family, as is usual with men of the greatest magnitude. At the same time he was appointed Sheriff-depute of Selkirkshire, which provided him with the means necessary for his young household. This proves at once the immense superiority of Tory to Whig in those days. Jeffrey, though he had also married, with the utmost daring, on something under £100 a year, and lived happily and hospitably upon the same up three pairs of stairs in a tall Edinburgh house, had no such chance possible. The luckier of the two had a pretty cottage at Lasswade, and many secondary advantages; and his Sheriffship brought him, besides the secure income which is of such vital importance

to every struggling young man, a reason and excuse for many wanderings about the country, which was his true study and workshop, though as yet he knew it not. By this time he had taken up what may be called his first real literary venture, his *Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border*, the most congenial work which could have been found, and perhaps one of the best exercises for his future career. In his legal expeditions through the little towns of Selkirkshire and the wilds of Ettrick Forest, he had his eyes and ears open for every song and ballad, and every congenial spirit who could help him to obtain such. And it is curious and touching to see how, as he goes on, name after name comes to light, which are henceforward to be associated with his whole after life. In one farmhouse he finds William Laidlaw; in another James Hogg, the most entirely self-taught and nature-trained of all the rustic poets. Hogg had "taught himself to read by copying the letters of a printed book as he lay watching his flock on the hillside," which is as nearly like the invention of that medium of communication for himself as can well be; and he was now, in his young manhood, no more than a shepherd, though he had begun with the earliest instinct of the peasant poet to write songs of his own, and was full of the minstrelsy of the district, the humble traditionary literature in which his mother had nursed him, as the mother of Burns had nursed her greater son. It is strange to see how large a part this floating oral literature had to do with the education of the Scot, and how little it appears to show in the

records of the other side of the Border, though there is no lack of English ballads to answer the same fine purpose. Bishop Percy and the gentlemen-antiquaries seem to have appropriated the study farther south; but Scott's associates in the Forest, the young sheep-farmers, the labouring hinds and shepherds, entered with enthusiasm into his pursuit.

He fell upon another assistant and associate in Edinburgh of a similar class by origin, but of acquirements so extraordinary and character so strange, that he merits a fuller notice. A wilder and more eccentric figure has rarely appeared in literature. This was John Leyden, a homely, shy, yet vain youth, from the south of Scotland, the very district which "the Shirra" was continually surveying, the son of a small hillside farmer, a being as boisterous as the winds and as wayward, a rustic enthusiast, a tender poet, a preacher licensed by the Church, and one of the most learned men of his generation—but with so many ridiculous characteristics and so bizarre both in mind and person, that it is difficult to award to him the applause of which he is truly worthy. He was one of those very poor students whose existence gave —and to some extent still gives—a special character to the little world of a Scotch University; one of the most penniless and unkempt of all the sons of letters, asking nothing of fate but knowledge, and feeding wildly upon everything in that shape which came in his way, without ever acquiring one of those graces of culture which to many are of so much more importance than culture itself. Constable, the enter-

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prising bookseller, who did not hesitate to offer terms which were "without precedent," to the writers of the *Review*, had begun his career not very long before in a little shop where rare old books, of which he was a lover, were to be found as well as the new. There one of the "foreigners," who then frequented Edinburgh, a gentle English *virtuoso*, book-lover, and student, Mr. Richard Heber, the elder brother of the future bishop, was a frequent visitor; and his attention was soon drawn to another frequenter of the shop, a scholar very unlike any species with which he was acquainted, speaking the broadest Scotch, as strange in manner, clothes, and appearance, as he was in accent, who, sometimes perched on a ladder, sometimes buried in a dusty corner, devoured the books which he could not afford to buy. Mr. Heber had become acquainted with Scott, and interested himself actively in the *Scottish Minstrelsy*. One day when in Constable's shop he fell by chance into conversation with this wild fellow-reader, whom he had so often watched with amusement, and soon found in him a kindred student. Leyden loved the legendary lore of his country as he loved everything else that belonged to his native dales—and this revelation brought about an introduction to Scott and to many gentle and cultivated persons otherwise entirely out of the poor student's way. Scott discovered that he was the author of many translations from the classics, and also from various European languages, which had appeared in the pages of the little *Edinburgh Magazine*, the mild successor of the

Mirror and *Lounger*, and the predecessor of *Blackwood;* and his very oddities and homeliness seem to have attracted all with whom he was brought in contact. Lord Cockburn describes this eccentric personage with all his usual genial breadth of touch:—

"John Leyden has said of himself, 'I often verge so nearly on absurdity that I know it is perfectly easy to misconceive me as well as misrepresent me.' This was quite true. He cannot be understood till the peculiarities to which he alludes are accounted for. . . . Ever in a state of excitement, ever ardent, ever panting for things unattainable by ordinary mortals, and successful to an extent sufficient to rouse the hopes of a young man ignorant of life, there was nothing that he thought beyond his reach; and not knowing what insincerity was, he spoke of his powers and his visions as openly as if he had been expounding what might be expected of another person. According to himself, John Leyden could easily in a few months have been a great physician, or surpassed Sir William Jones in Oriental literature, or Milton in poetry; yet at the very time he was thus exposing himself he was not only simple but generous and humble. He was a wild-looking thin Roxburghshire man, with sandy hair, a screech voice, and staring eyes, exactly as he came from his native village; and not one of those not very attractive personal qualities would he have exchanged for all the graces of Apollo. By the time I knew him he had made himself one of our social shows, and could and did say whatever he chose. His delight lay in an argument about the Scotch Church, or Oriental literature, or Scotch poetry, or odd customs or scenery, always conducted on his part in a high shrill voice, with great intensity and an utter unconsciousness of the amazement of strangers."

This strange being was what is called a probationer of the Church of Scotland, licensed to preach though not appointed to any charge; but either because his odd manner and wild appearance made him un-

popular, or from the want of inclination in himself, he does not seem, though he preached occasionally, to have shown any desire to follow his profession. After a considerable interval of vague projects he set his heart finally on going to India, and his many friends exerted themselves to get him an appointment. It was found, however, that the only thing to be got was a commission as surgeon assistant, and that to have any chance even of this he must go through his medical examination within six weeks. "This news, which would have crushed any other man's hopes to the dust, was only a welcome fillip to the ardour of Leyden. He that same hour grappled with a new science, in full confidence that whatever ordinary men could do in three or four years his energy could accomplish in as many months." His confidence in himself was justified, and he passed his examination and took his medical degree within the time appointed. Just before leaving England he published a volume of poetry, including the *Scenes of Infancy*, which had previously had some local acceptance. Nothing can show better the devotion of his mind to the native landscape, which was always to him the most lovely in the world, than the following verses taken from that poem :—

"When first around my infant head
Delusive dreams their visions shed,
To soften or to soothe the soul;
In every scene with glad surprise
I saw my native groves arise,
And Teviot's crystal waters roll.

"And when religion raised my view
Beyond this concave's azure blue,
Where flowers of fairer lustre blow;
Where Eden's groves again shall bloom
Beyond the desert of the tomb,
And living streams for ever flow;

"The gems of soft celestial dye,
Were such as often met my eye,
Expanding green on Teviot's side;
The living streams whose pearly wave
In fancy's eye appeared to lave
Resembled Teviot's brimful tide."

The simple enthusiast-patriotism which saw Teviot in every stream of beauty, and could conceive no better emblem of the streams of paradise, was Leyden's ruling passion. He went to India, however, disappearing for ever from Teviot and all the scenery and society of his native country, and went on his violent stormy way—like a sort of wandering irregular comet, most unlike, even in his indomitable perseverance and labour, to the conventional idea of the cautious Scot—through many a strange scene. His rapid initiation into the science of medicine does not seem to have done much more for him than ensure his appointment. Arrived in India, he became first a Professor, then a Judge, and rapidly passed through various offices, each involving a new branch of information. While he was doing the active duties of these, he made a grasp at all the principal languages of the Continent. Finally he went with Lord Minto to Java, then newly added to the British provinces, and rushing into a shut-up house, where he had been

informed a treasure of books was to be found, caught fever and died at thirty-six, in the year 1811. In his last illness, some friend who had gone to see him told him an anecdote of the Liddesdale volunteers, the men of his own district — how they had risen as one man on a false alarm of invasion, similar to that of which Scott makes picturesque use in the *Antiquary*. The Borderers came hurrying down from all sides, some of them swimming the river in their eagerness, and marched into Hawick at daybreak, playing the favourite air of the district, "Wha daur meddle wi' me?" The story, the vivid recollection, the sudden exciting touch of all those emotions which were the very spring of his being, intoxicated the sick man. He sprang up in his bed, and in his harsh voice, more tremulous than usual in its shrill weakness, "with strange melody and stranger gesticulations," sang in a transport of feverish enthusiasm the song of his native hills. A more characteristic conclusion could not be.

There is a kindred story told in illustration of the efforts of this enthusiastic coadjutor in Scott's work, which is our more immediate subject, and which we may tell in Mr. Lockhart's words:—

"An interesting fragment had been obtained of an ancient historical ballad, but the remainder, to the great disturbance of the editor, was not to be recovered. Two days after, while he was sitting with some company after dinner, a sound was heard at a distance like that of the whistling of a tempest through the torn rigging of the vessel which scuds before it. The sounds increased as they approached more near; and Leyden (to the great astonishment of such of the guests as did not

know him) burst into the room chanting the desiderated ballad with the most enthusiastic gestures, and all the energy of what he used to call the *saw-tones* of his voice. It turned out that he had walked between forty and fifty miles and back again, for the sole purpose of visiting an old person who promised this precious remnant of antiquity."

Such was the atmosphere of genial patriotic enthusiasm which Scott diffused about him, and which on every hand, in the most unlikely quarters, and under the most uncouth circumstances, he found a response to. In all his researches, in the exercise of his magistracy, in the little legal courts he held, and in his progress from one hamlet, from one farmhouse, to another, he was, like Cervantes in his tax-gathering, acquiring a more and more perfect knowledge of the unknown world which he was to reveal. Scotland, fresh and rural, with all those pastoral hills and wild moorlands; the salmon-spearing in the river, the otter-hunt, the farmhouse parlour, the more refined hospitalities of the laird; or, quainter still, the little circles of the country towns; the bailies and provosts, the minister in his manse, the women at their doors, the unpunctual coach, the quick-tongued landlady; all found a place in his memory. Not so much as the "natural," the "innocent," the harmless creature so often visible in Scotland about a hamlet or farmsteading, with curious gleams of natural cunning lighting up its gentle idiocy, was left out. He had no prevision of the use he was to make of all those kindly experiences; his head was full of ballad measures and scraps of antique verse — or at most humming with the simple inspiration of the Minstrel's

Lay or the easy melodious story of the *Lady of the Lake*. He was all unaware of the issue that was to come of that friendly interest in men and all their ways which made every moorland path amusing and delightful to him, and touched men and dogs alike with the sensation of something brotherly and kind approaching. He was never above his company, though that was of all sorts and conditions; and though he was thought in later days to be ambitious and aristocratical in his ideas,—as he certainly was in his principles,—no man could be more open to all sympathies and charities, or more entirely at home with his fellow-creatures, or at least his fellow-countrymen, wherever he met them. Genial mirth and fellowship accompanied him wherever he went. He was as happy with an old wife (if she knew any ballads) in her homely *but* and *ben* as with a duchess (though he was not without a true British devotion to duchesses too). His acquaintance was infinite, and there was nothing in life which he did not take the good of, with his mind and his eyes ever open, amid the most commonplace circumstances, to those notes of human tragedy which run through every strain, and to the pathos and uncomplaining pangs of existence, as well as to the humours and vanities and endless vagaries of the crowd. The very cows in the pastures, who were individual creatures to the milkmaids and almost human, entered into his economy of life. He saw everything, and laid up in store, in his great silent genial intelligence, all those varied scenes and still more varied people, without

knowing what use he was to make of them; and thinking of nothing—save perhaps of the rhymed romances which were to win him an easy celebrity and a great deal of substantial recompense—followed the natural bent of his mind in making friends everywhere, and acquiring such an acquaintance with the untrodden ways of his own country as was scarcely possessed by any other man alive.

The publication of the *Minstrelsy* led by natural succession to Scott's first original work. Several of his own ballads had found a place in the collection, and by the time the third volume was thought of, mention is made of "a long poem . . . a kind of romance of Border chivalry in a light horseman sort of stanza," which he intended to include in it. The reader will have little difficulty in recognising this idea as carried out in the *Lay of the Last Minstrel*, which, however, fortunately proved too long for anything but independent publication. The *Minstrelsy* had a great success, bringing as much money to its editor, not to speak of reputation, as all the other poets put together had received for all their productions—a curious example of the peculiarities of the public taste and the different estimate made by contemporaries and by posterity. No doubt, however, that such a book as the *Minstrelsy* secured a crowd of easy readers, who would not have ventured to engage upon a long and serious poem, and whom the novelty and eccentricities of the *Lyrical Ballads* would have discouraged. One of the critics of the day described the book as containing "the elements

of a hundred historical romances." It was thus an excellent beginning to Scott's career.

That career was almost too prosperous for a poet. He had money left him, or rather a small estate convertible into money, and flourished and increased. In 1804 he removed to Ashestiel, a house henceforth almost as closely connected with his memory as his own Abbotsford, and which was within the district of which he was Sheriff. In 1805, when he was twenty-nine, the *Lay* was published. By this time Ballantyne, whose then modest fortune seemed to have been made by the *Minstrelsy*, and before whom the brightest prospects were opening, had removed to Edinburgh, and the close connection between the printer and the poet, which lasted so long and ended so tragically, was begun. "The success of the *Lay*," says Lockhart, "at once decided that literature should form the main business of Scott's life." No poem of that time, indeed, we believe, no poem of any time, ever attained so immense a popularity on the moment. It moved the whole English world from the highest to the lowest. Pitt and Fox, agreeing in nothing else, agreed in this. The picturesque life of the strain, its novelty, its freshness, the interest of the story, the romantic picture of an ancient world, in which all was comprehensible, where there was neither mysticism, nor even any mystery beyond that degree of pleasurable wonder which stirs and stimulates without confusing the mind —all united to achieve the easiest and completest of conquests. That a poem which nobody, not even

Scott's greatest lovers, would assert to be a great poem, should thus have triumphed over all the great poetry that was contemporary to it, is a marvel which no one has ever been able to explain. The copyright of the two unlucky volumes which contained the "Ancient Mariner" and many of Wordsworth's finest minor poems had a very short time before been given back to their authors as entirely without value, while this fresh and sparkling *Lay* brought Scott the best part of £1000, flew through edition after edition, and took the world by storm. The reason probably was that while the other poets of the time had been discoursing upon simplicity of language and the adoption of common modes of expression instead of the elevated diction of the past—without doing any more to carry out their professions than an Art deeper than these professions permitted—Scott, without saying anything about it, and with no deeper meaning to hamper him, really did what they professed to do, and wrote his poem in the simplest measure and the least distinctive language, making it as easy to read as any ballad. The "Mariner," save when it struck the dreamy fancy of some soul predestinate, one of those whom the weird narrator recognised at the first glance as "the man who must hear me," was, on the face of it, above and beyond the comprehension of the multitude, who have indeed arrived at a glimmering understanding of its strange beauty nowadays by dint of much explaining and lecturing, but who will never take to it heartily. And Wordsworth's treatment of some of the more subtle sentiments of

the heart, although expressed in language ostentatiously simple, must always have left a number of readers agape. How, for instance, were the shallower souls, unacquainted with the mysteries of their own thoughts, to understand the wonderful little gleam of spiritual insight which is conveyed in the little poem —so clumsily named, and so weakened, short as it is, by unnecessary repetitions — the "Anecdote for Fathers"? Here the language, indeed, is simple enough, but the thought most abstruse:—

"My Boy was by my side, so slim
And graceful in his rustic dress!
And, as we talked, I questioned him,
In very idleness.

"'Now tell me, had you rather be,'
I said, and took him by the arm,
'On Kilve's smooth shore, by the green sea,
Or here at Liswyn farm?'

"In careless mood he looked at me,
While still I held him by the arm,
And said, 'At Kilve I'd rather be
Than here at Liswyn farm.'

"'Now, little Edward, say why so;
My little Edward, tell me why.'—
'I cannot tell, I do not know.'—
'Why, this is strange,' said I;

"'For, here are woods, and green hills warm:
There surely must some reason be
Why you would change sweet Liswyn farm
For Kilve by the green sea.'

"At this, my Boy hung down his head,
He blushed with shame, nor made reply;

And five times to the child I said,
'Why, Edward, tell me why?'

"His head he raised—there was in sight,
It caught his eye, he saw it plain—
Upon the house-top, glittering bright,
A broad and gilded Vane.

"Then did the Boy his tongue unlock;
And thus to me he made reply:
'At Kilve there was no weathercock,
And that's the reason why.'"

There is perhaps no bit of metaphysics in the language by which an unenlightened reader would be so entirely puzzled as by this seeming simplicity. It is the very perfection of poetic insight, an evanescent thought caught on the flight and made everlasting, though too ethereal, too momentary, to yield its secret in its instantaneous passage to any eye less divinely qualified. Those who have eyes to see it perceive what is thus set before them, but to those who have not, a volume of explanation would make the matter no clearer. How different was Scott! he has his perceptions too, but they throw no shadow of over-profound meaning upon the sunshiny tale. It flows like a blithe Highland stream over its rocks and stones—here dashing round a great boulder, there flowing swift and clear over the shallows. Compare with Wordsworth's subtle divination the picturesque and straightforward magic of the *Lay:* fair Melrose in the moonlight and the Wizard in his grave, and the strange illumination shining upon the pale visage of the Monk and the dark-brow'd warrior's mail, give the merest school-

boy a pleasurable thrill, and are comprehensible as a b c.

"Before their eyes the Wizard lay,
As if he had not been dead a day.
His hoary beard in silver roll'd,
He seem'd some seventy winters old;
A palmer's amice wrapp'd him round,
With a wrought Spanish baldric bound,
Like a pilgrim from beyond the sea:
His left hand held his Book of Might;
A silver cross was in his right;
The lamp was placed beside his knee:
High and majestic was his look,
At which the fellest fiends had shook,
And all unruffled was his face:
They trusted his soul had gotten grace.

"Often had William of Deloraine
Rode through the battle's bloody plain,
And trampled down the warriors slain,
And neither known remorse nor awe;
Yet now remorse and awe he own'd;
His breath came thick, his head swam round,
When this strange scene of death he saw.
Bewilder'd and unnerved he stood,
And the priest pray'd fervently and loud:
With eyes averted prayed he;
He might not endure the sight to see,
Of the man he had loved so brotherly.

'And when the priest his death-prayer had pray'd,
Thus unto Deloraine he said:—
'Now, speed thee what thou hast to do,
Or, Warrior, we may dearly rue;
For those, thou may'st not look upon,
Are gathering fast round the yawning stone!'—

Then Deloraine, in terror, took
From the cold hand the Mighty Book,
With iron clasp'd, and with iron bound:
He thought, as he took it, the dead man frown'd;
But the glare of the sepulchral light,
Perchance, had dazzled the warrior's sight."

Here is the straightforward supernatural in the most picturesque and romantic setting; but who is there that could be in the least trouble to know what it means? Michael Scott and his big book are plain as daylight in comparison with that urchin with his weathercock. There are no metaphysics in the whole fresh, musical, daylight strain. Scott was not particular about the plainness of his language, taking what came, having no time to weigh syllables, but he made his tale so clear that he may run who readeth it. He was understood wherever he went. He perplexed nobody—more than they like to be perplexed by the honest intricacies of the story. This, we think, was the secret of the extraordinary and sudden conquest he made of the entire kingdom. The public had been hearing a great deal of the advantage of making use in poetry of common language and events; they had heard on the other side torrents of abuse poured upon this theory, and had been assured that poetry could not exist at all except according to the old canons. And lo, while the tumult went on over their heads, not leaving them calm enough to judge for themselves, here suddenly, carelessly, with a delightful spontaneous indifference to all principles of art, came in this new

minstrel and sang them, in a light and flowing rhythm which carried them along like the tune of a ballad, a story they could understand from beginning to end! Perplexed by Wordsworth, confounded by Coleridge, finding themselves trapped by this professed simplicity into pitfalls of mysticism and miracle, what wonder that the common world of not too wise or discriminating readers escaped into Scott with a sense of relief which was at once enthusiasm and gratitude? Here, at least, was something fine, something spirit-stirring, like a martial air, like the native music of their country, which everybody, thank heaven, could understand.

There is a curious story told of the effect produced upon Pitt by the new poem which is well worth quoting; he was so moved by it that an idea of advancing the author, who had such power over the imagination, struck even his preoccupied mind. Perhaps he felt that here was an influence, unthought of before, which might be turned to use even in imperial affairs. "The Chancellor asked me about you and your then situation," said the all-powerful Dundas, who was a sort of Scotch viceroy and supreme manager of Scotch affairs and patronage, in a letter to Scott; "and after I had answered him, Pitt observed — 'He can't remain as he is,' and desired me to 'look to it.'" He then repeated some lines from the *Lay* describing the old harper's embarrassment when asked to play, and said, "'This is a sort of thing which I might have expected in painting, but could never have fancied capable of being given in poetry.'" The great statesman's idea of what could

be expressed in painting, but not in poetry, is so curious that we must quote the passage :—

"The humble boon was soon obtain'd;
The Aged Minstrel audience gain'd.
But, when he reach'd the room of state,
Where she, with all her ladies, sate,
Perchance he wish'd his boon denied:
For, when to tune his harp he tried,
His trembling hand had lost the ease,
Which marks security to please;
And scenes, long past, of joy and pain,
Came wildering o'er his aged brain—
He tried to tune his harp in vain!
The pitying Duchess praised its chime,
And gave him heart, and gave him time,
Till every string's according glee
Was blended into harmony.
And then, he said, he would full fain
He could recall an ancient strain,
He never thought to sing again.
It was not framed for village churls,
But for high dames and mighty earls;
He had play'd it to King Charles the Good,
When he kept court in Holyrood;
And much he wish'd, yet feared, to try
The long-forgotten melody.
Amid the strings his fingers stray'd,
And an uncertain warbling made,
And oft he shook his hoary head.
But when he caught the measure wild,
The old man raised his face, and smiled;
And lighten'd up his faded eye,
With all a poet's ecstasy!
In varying cadence, soft or strong,
He swept the sounding chords along:
The present scene, the future lot,
His toils, his wants, were all forgot:

Cold diffidence, and age's frost,
In the full tide of song were lost;
Each blank, in faithless memory void,
The poet's glowing thought supplied;
And, while his heart responsive wrung,
'Twas thus the Latest Minstrel sung."

What a clear, soft, animated description is this of an internal struggle, enough to touch the heart with easy sympathy without making any undue demand upon it either of emotion or understanding! But where Mr. Pitt would have found a painter in his time to express all that on one canvas we are unable to imagine.

It is not unnatural, however, that Southey, getting three pounds seventeen shillings for his elaborate "Madoc" which had cost him so much labour, for which he had collected waggon-loads of material, and weighed every word, and verified every landscape, should record with a sigh of wonder, if not envy, that Scott had sold 4500 of the *Lay*, and made above a thousand pounds by it. It was hard not only to be surpassed, in the opinion of the critics, by those brethren-in-arms whom he allowed to be at least as great poets as himself, but to be outdone with the public by this new adventurer with the easy canter of his "light horseman sort of stanza." "You see the whole extent of his powers in the *Minstrel's Lay*," the mortified but not ungenerous poet wrote afterwards when he made Scott's acquaintance. And he characterises it, not unjustly, "as a very amusing poem; it excites a novel-like interest, but you *dis-*

cover nothing on after perusal." It is not, indeed, at all wonderful that the poets who were possessed by a profound sense of the gravity of their mission should have looked on with an almost stunned surprise at this light and careless and easy success. Even the author felt himself called upon to "make the necessary deductions from his own merits in a calm attempt to account for its popularity." It was a surprise to himself as well as to the rest of the world.

Success so far above his expectation seems to have decided Scott to trust himself in future to the chances of literature and such preferment as he could obtain, and to give up the precarious practice of his profession, which had never brought him anything worth considering. He was, as we have said, already wonderfully well off for a poet. He is understood to have had with his Sheriffship about a thousand a year—a much more considerable income then than now. Shortly after the publication of the *Lay* he obtained another office—a clerkship of the Court of Session, a permanent appointment in which there was security for the future as well as gain for the present. About the same time he took another step more momentous still: which was the transplanting of Ballantyne and his business to Edinburgh—an expensive operation which required money. The consequence of several advances made by Scott to his humble friend was that the poet became the partner of the printer—an arrangement which was of the greatest, and finally of the most fatal, moment in

the story of his life. This partial entry into the interests of "the booksellers" seems to have filled his active mind with a hundred schemes. "In the very first letter I have found from Scott to his partner," says Mr. Lockhart, "occur suggestions about new editions of Thomson, Dryden, and Tacitus, and, moreover, of a grand edition of the British poets in one hundred volumes, of which last he designed himself to be the editor." "In the course of the summer and autumn we find him in correspondence about another gigantic scheme—a uniform series of the ancient English Chronicles." Nothing could better show the energy of the man. He was far above any elation of vanity in the strange and bewildering success which had come to him—a success in which, we may almost be permitted to say, he himself never believed. And he set to work at once in the new channel opened to him, altogether unconscious yet of the much more brilliant channel not yet opened.

While he was planning these undertakings with the steadiness and resolution of a man determined to make his fortune as he best could for the advantage of his family, since his proper profession afforded no promise of advancement, the poetry, that wonderful accidental gift which he had found, by the way, without premeditation, was his greatest pleasure and diversion, among the many enjoyments of his genial life. Of *Marmion*, he says, "that the period of its composition was a very happy one in my life; so that I remember with pleasure at this moment some of the spots in which particular passages were composed."

These words were written a quarter of a century after the composition of *Marmion*. And no doubt all the still and sweet recesses of Tweedside, the old ash-trees on the Sheriff's Knowe, the wilder moorland hills and braes beyond the green inclosure of Ashestiel, must have risen grateful and soothing before him as he wrote,—"Oh man!" he said to his son-in-law, in familiar, kindly, Scottish speech, when he was beginning to be old—"Oh man! I had many a grand gallop among these braes when I was thinking of *Marmion*—but a trotting, canny pony must serve me now." When he was out with his volunteers, another informant tells us, "In the intervals of the drilling Scott used to delight in walking his powerful black steed up and down by himself upon the Portobello sands within the beating of the surge; and now and then you would see him plunge in his spurs and go off as if at the charge, with the spray dashing about him. As we rode back to Musselburgh, he often came and placed himself beside me to repeat the verses he had been composing during these pauses of our exercise." The lines that were thus sung to himself, as his big horse thundered over the moorland, or splashed through the wet sands in a cloud of salt spray, have all the freshness of the northern air, and all the rhythm of winds and waters in them. Not so do the higher strains of divine poetry come into being. But Scott chanted his song of battle and adventure to himself, in a rapture of simple poetic feeling, enhanced by the wholesome fervour of happy life, by the excitement of rapid motion, and the full sweep and

tide of being, which swelled all his veins and made mind and body harmonious. He had no prophet's burden to deliver, no solemn lesson to teach, but gave out to his audience in a genial and friendly flood the happy moments, the melodious impulses, and favourite studies of his own nature. It is imagination in its simplest and least complicated development —no drama, but a tale: with no profound undercurrent of meaning, but its happy significance on the surface, its simple loves, its martial progresses, its tuneful notes of generous conflict. Nothing mean or petty or poor is in the range of this cheerful, yet tender art. Simple as it is, the high-minded Scots gentleman on his big charger is in entire harmony with the strain. It never descends below his level. Before he transmitted it, all glowing with life and movement, to his audience, it had swept through his own mind like a brisk, melodious breeze, touching him with the same thrill of pleasure and feeling as that which moved the readers.

There is no evidence that Scott thought of his poetry otherwise than in this light. He did not expect it to flow on for ever, nor believed that he had opened a perennial fountain. When the interest flagged he was not surprised, nor was he bitterly disappointed. The popularity of *Marmion*,' indeed, he confesses, almost turned his head. It gave him "such a *heeze* (hoist) he had for a moment almost lost his footing." But he had far too much good sense ever really to lose his footing. Mrs. Grant compares him to a burning-glass which the rays of admiration went through

without affecting it. The public, which was unanimous, did all it was possible to do to disturb the modest equilibrium of the poet. "The only question at issue," his friend Ellis wrote from London, from the midst of the best society, "is whether the *Lay* or *Marmion* should be reputed the most pleasing poem in our language." Thus, only himself was his rival, and it was generally allowed that there was nothing else by which to measure these two masterpieces.

One voice alone was raised against this universal conclusion. In the midst of such a chorus of applause, and an enthusiasm so general, there is something amusing as well as respectable in the impartiality and boldness with which little Jeffrey in his *Review*, at the height of his friend's success and fame, assailed the easy-tempered giant. One April night, when all the world had been burning incense round him, Scott received a number of that *Review* which still carried terror to every literary bosom. But he was a contributor, one of the brotherhood, and it can scarcely be supposed that he looked upon it with any alarm. Accompanying the *Review*, however, was a manly little note from the editor: "If I did not give you credit for more magnanimity than others of your irritable tribe, I should scarcely venture to put this into your hands," Jeffrey wrote. "I have spoken of your poem exactly as I think, and though I cannot reasonably suppose that you will be pleased with everything I have said, it would mortify me very severely to believe I had given you pain." On the same evening the critic had been engaged to dine

with the poet. Scott wrote to him at once, assuring him that no criticism could alter his friendship; but it is scarcely possible to suppose that when the guests arrived for that dinner there was not a somewhat rapid pulsation in the bosom of the dauntless little man whose integrity had been so painfully proved. Scott received him with all his usual cordiality; but the lady of the house could scarcely be expected to be equally heroic, and the clumsy little shaft which she discharged at her husband's critic has been preserved in the history. It is a curious passage-at-arms altogether. In the present day, when Reviews are less authoritative and authors more used to them, the occurrence would attract less attention; but the verdict of "Judge Jeffrey" then was more important than any verdict now, and the two men were members of a limited society through which the thrill of such an encounter would run like an electric current. There could not be a better proof of the impartiality of the *Review*, which, as its victims thought over the Border, was incapable of abusing anything Scotch; or of the courageous vigour which could thus oppose the tide of universal enthusiasm, and assail not only an influential member of society but a friend whom the critic could not help encountering every day.

Whether Scott's magnanimity was less great than it appeared, or whether it was the heightening fervour of politics which made it impossible for a Tory to find fellowship any longer in the Whig camp, it is difficult to ascertain, but, as a matter of fact, he here ceased to be a contributor to the *Edinburgh Review;* and

it was not very long before all his political sympathies were enlisted for its rival, the new *Quarterly*, before which for a moment even the bold Jeffrey quailed. The severance thus begun went farther than one of mere literature. It involved the business relations of the poet, as well as his relations with his friends. Various accidents happened, which intensified, in the person of Constable the publisher, the first prick of offence which had been given by Jeffrey. And in the meantime James Ballantyne the printer had been joined by his brother John, who was believed to have the powers necessary for conducting an enlarged business. The consequence was that while the *Quarterly Review* was instituted in London, the firm of John Ballantyne and Co., of which Scott was an undisclosed partner, was established in Edinburgh, and became henceforward the chief undertaking of his life.

Unfortunately all manner of labours and embarrassments came in its train. Without this, all those reproaches that have been lavished upon him as to the extravagances of Abbotsford, and his supposed foolish weakness in desiring to leave a local habitation and an estate behind him for the enjoyment of his children after him — or of founding a family according to the ill-natured version of this most natural wish—might have been spared. He had an income of £1600 a year from his legal appointments, and received larger sums for his work than all the other writers of the time put together; and but for the drain of this badly-managed and unsuccessful

business, in which he was the only partner with any capital, his lands and his mock castle, and his old furniture and properties, would have been very natural vanities. His life seems to have been hampered and embarrassed almost from the first moment of his connection with this unfortunate firm. It is a curious commentary upon popular opinion, which has been long so firmly fixed as to the caution and prudence of the Scotch character, to cast a glance from this distance across three parts of a century at the doings of "the trade" in Edinburgh in those heroic days: at Constable, who "hated accounts, and systematically refused, during the most vigorous years of his life, to examine or sign a balance-sheet:" at the Ballantynes blundering jovially along — Messrs. Rigdumfunnidos and Aldiborontiphoscophornio, well worthy of these respectable appellations; the one somewhat heavy in his loyal enthusiasm and readiness to take up everything that pleased the master-eye; the other fun impersonated, "jocund Johnny," the gayest of book-keepers. That it should have been with these two simple and rash companions—rash with the extraordinary temerity of men who know little and have little to lose — that Scott with his noble intellect and supreme good sense plunged into unfamiliar business, is the most wonderful of problems. They kept him in perpetual amusement with their humours and contrast—they looked up to him with admirable devotion: and for these qualities he allowed them to draw him into ruin.

The *Lady of the Lake* appeared in 1809. There had been some wavering of comparison between *Marmion* and the *Lay*. There was none with this new poem. It took the world by storm. The public was unanimous in its favour; the reviews vied with each other in celebrating this greatest poem of the age. Even Jeffrey, the "arch-critic," bowed down before it—he who had been so rash as to lift up his voice against *Marmion*. Scott had two thousand guineas nominally for it, but more in reality. "The whole country rang with the praises of the poet." And there was yet another evidence of his fame, which is the most extraordinary of all. "It is a well-ascertained fact," says Lockhart, "that from the date of the publication of the *Lady of the Lake* the post-horse duty rose in an extraordinary degree, and indeed it continued to do so regularly for a number of years, the author's succeeding works keeping up the enthusiasm for our scenery which he had thus originally created." This is a quaint and picturesque adjunct to literary fame which the greatest of writers could not hope for now. The *Lady of the Lake* was the culmination of Scott's poetical reputation. *Rokeby*, which followed, was bought and read almost as eagerly, but not received into the popular heart, and the *Lord of the Isles* was—for Scott—a failure. Why it should have been so it is vain now to inquire; for its descriptions are as animated and its story as attractive as those of its predecessors, and the character of Bruce has a high and fine ideal nobility which is above anything in his

previous works. But the vein, perhaps, was too thin at all times to bear much working, and was now wearing out; while, on the other hand, a new poet, as brilliant, as comprehensible, and more romantic, with a much greater poetic genius—Byron—had entered the field, and Scott had for the first time a rival who, besides possessing higher qualities than himself at the heart of the matter, had as great a command of those gifts which gain the public ear.

Before, however, entering upon the history of Scott's more permanent triumphs, now about to commence, we must note the labours in which, throughout all this brief summer of extraordinary poetical fame, he had been steadily engaged, chiefly to supply the ceaseless drain upon his powers made by the unfortunate firm, which had to be kept afloat, whatever happened. To many men such works as the *Lives of Dryden* and *Swift* would be sufficient to sustain a modest fame. To his exuberant genius this went for little. These were the daily work of his life, while his brighter inspirations were its exhilaration, its glory, its delight: but not less because they take so little importance in the record were they conscientious and valuable work. It is possible enough, we cannot help feeling, that at this period of his career Scott may have looked upon himself as another Southey, — more popular, since his themes were far nearer to his audience and more interesting, but fated to the same kind of honourable and hard-working reputation after his flush of poetical fame should be past,—an able and trustworthy biographer, a commentator of endless

patience and research, a writer wielding some power in the Reviews, and always with that soft aureole of poetical light upon his head, pleasing his friends and giving dignity to his career. It is difficult to imagine the genial and large being of the great Scotsman, with his universal hospitality and liberality, the wide atmosphere about him, the endless company — retainers, dependants, courtiers — fixed into such a groove of laborious excellence. But still it is evident that this is what might have been; and as he went to his daily work after the Courts were over, and threaded through all the muddy literary byways,— where among the garbage some scraps of knowledge of one or other of his subjects might be found, always with an anxious thought in his mind of those two merry companions who were compromising his name and bringing endless burdens upon him, yet were at the same time his faithful henchmen and supporters, not to be thrown off,—one is tempted to believe that this possibility must often have entered Scott's mind; and that he must have realised the possibility of becoming a literary hack, though of the noblest kind—a constant and steady workman turning out his tale of labour, so many pages day by day. Many excellent men have done this, and served the world as honestly as any other kind of craftsman: but the idea has always been an obnoxious one, and the suggestion something like an insult. The poorest penny-a-liner would fain keep up a little fiction of taste and liking to dignify his drudgery. And in those days, when Jeffrey hesitated whether writing for

money was not altogether beneath the generous instincts of a gentleman, it must have been harder still to contemplate. From this fate, however, Scott was saved by one of the most extraordinary developments of unthought-of genius that ever was known.

In the year 1805, when the *Lay* was in its first tide of popularity, when James Ballantyne, newly come to Edinburgh, had just begun to tax the resources and excite the imagination of his princely friend with thoughts of an ideal publishing house and magnificent literary undertaking,—when his "barmy noddle" was "working prime" with so many plans and ideas that it was wonderful how one head could contain them,—Scott, with some sudden fancy for another kind of work, turned from his "Dryden" and wrote the opening chapters of *Waverley*. What chance touch of his brimful creative imagination it was that suddenly brought out of the mists, in the midst of all those dusty tracts and notes, the fine visionary scene of Waverley Honour, with all those high-bred accessories and that delicate group, a little too faint in colour, Sir Everard and Mrs. Rachel, and the graceful boy who was their heir, who can tell? The wisest prophet could ill have divined, from the soft neutral tints of this first picture, what sort of a succession, what brilliant groups, what animated scenes, were to follow. Even in his own later work, when he abandoned his best and most characteristic field and crossed the Tweed to English scenes and subjects, we do not remember any companion picture to that preface. Had he thrown himself into *Ivanhoe* at once, or

taken up some romance of the Border, either enterprise would have been more likely. When he had put this beautiful sketch upon his canvas he paused doubtful, and showed the work "to a critical friend, whose opinion was unfavourable." This, it is supposed, was William Erskine. It was not, fortunately for them, Jeffrey or any of his band. Scott put his work away, so far as appears, without a sigh. He had so much in hand; what did a half-told tale matter? Some years after, when the strain of the Ballantynes began to tell, he took out his bit of manuscript and looked at it, grudging perhaps to have written anything that could not be made use of—and this time with a sigh put it back again. But, after a further interval of several years, chance again brought the old packet of papers to light. Scott himself gives an account of it to his friend Mr. Morritt, of Rokeby, in the following words:—

"I must now account for my own laziness, which I do, by referring you to a small anonymous sort of a novel in three volumes, *Waverley*, which you will receive by the mail of this day. It was a very old attempt of mine to embody some traits of those characters and manners peculiar to Scotland, the last remnants of which vanished during my own youth, so that few or no traces now remain. I had written great part of the first volume, and sketched other passages, when I mislaid the MS., and only found it by the merest accident as I was rummaging the drawers of an old cabinet, and I took the fancy of finishing it, which I did so fast, that the last two volumes were written in three weeks. . . . It has made a very strong impression here, and the good people of Edinburgh are busied in tracing the author, and in finding out originals for the portraits it contains. . . . Jeffrey has offered to make oath that it is mine, and another great critic has tendered his affidavit *ex*

contrario; so that these authorities have divided the Gude Town. . . . Let me know your opinion about it. . . . The truth is, that *this sort of muddling work* amuses me, and I am something in the condition of Joseph Surface, who was embarrassed by getting himself too good a reputation; for many things may please people well enough anonymously, which, if they had me on the title page would just give me that sort of ill name which precedes hanging—and that would be in many respects inconvenient if I thought of again trying a *grande opus.*"

No man could have been more unconscious that the moment of the *grande opus* had come. No doubt Scott often wrote with a playful depreciation not quite sincere, of his productions, which is the very comprehensible expedient of a man both modest and humorous, to elude extravagant praises and even his own vanity, if he has any. But in this case it is evident his mind was directed to an altogether different kind of *chef-d'œuvre,* and the anonymous novel, the *sort of muddling work,* was a bow drawn at a venture, upon which no very great hopes were fixed. The latter part of the book must all have been written between the 4th of June and the 1st of July, Mr. Lockhart informs us; and he tells a story of a party of young men over their wine, one of whom, the host of the occasion, changed his seat uneasily, that he might avoid the sight of "a confounded hand" writing at an opposite window. "Ever since we sat down I have been watching it," he said. "It never stops; page after page is finished and thrown on that heap of MS., and still it goes on; and so it will be till candles are brought in, and God knows how long after that. It is the same every night.

I can't bear the sight of it when I'm not at my books." This was Scott's hand, visible at the back window of his house in North Castle Street, Edinburgh. And through all those long bright summer nights, the longest and sweetest in the year, he sat, never raising his head, with that crowd of new-created beings coming and going round him—Vich Ian Vohr in his torchlight hall, and Flora shrouding her high-bred beauty in her Highland plaid, and Evan Dhu, and all the clan; and the grotesque and generous presence of the Baron; and poor Prince Charlie, whom no Scotsman names without a certain pang; and all the tragic gaiety in the old halls at Holyrood. No need to pause as the swift scenes flew on, succeeding each other. Where, amid all the analysis in which we delight nowadays, and all our studies of character, shall we find anything that stands out in such breadth of life? Scott is so far like Shakspeare that we take him with us into history, and never know how much of our knowledge and our impressions is due to his genius, and how much to ascertained fact. And the effect upon his contemporaries was greater than any sensation that had been previously received from literature. Such fiction itself was a new thing. Since Richardson and Fielding there had been no work of this kind which men and women alike would care to read — if, indeed, men can ever have been said sincerely and generally to care for Richardson, or women for Fielding. Scott took in all and united them. He was manly, and he was pure. He gave no undue importance to senti-

ment, but he honoured honest love and the domestic affections. And while he was incapable of eclipsing the reasonable world with the shadow of Sport as some modern novelists do, he was as willing to spear a salmon or hunt an otter in literature as in life.

But the great thing Scott did was to unfold a new country, a new world, to his contemporaries. We ourselves, calm in all the unconscious gain which his existence and work has added to the general inheritance, can scarcely realise to ourselves what it would be to Scotland to sweep Scott out of her. It is a thing, thank heaven, which no calamity can do; but if it could be done, what an impoverished country would be left behind! This has been one of the unhappy particulars in the fate of Ireland, with which misgovernment has had nothing to do. She has had no Burns and no Scott. Her beautiful scenery has never been populated with noble and gentle human beings claiming the interest of the world. Her genius has wasted itself in wild verses, in the records of wild pranks and jokes. No great magician has made her shores familiar, not to Englishmen only, but to mankind; no poet of the highest order has sung her cabins and her fields. If the genius was there, it has been wasted, and never come to fruit. Miss Edgeworth, it is true, made a beginning of this noblest of all works, and seemed for a moment likely to open a way by which the Irish heart might have been known; but she was not strong enough for the mission, and was soon led away from it to the moralities of the schoolroom, and the complications of fashionable

life. When Scott found his neglected manuscript in the drawer of the cabinet where he was seeking his fishing-tackle, Scotland was less interesting than Ireland to the general mind, and equally unknown. The ordinary Englishman's idea of the Scot had scarcely changed since the time when the first Stuart came to the throne, and his beggarly and grasping followers became the proverb of the ignorant but wealthy Southern, who saw in them nothing but a race of harpies and parasites. Such was the idea which Johnson entertained and expressed with a vigour which no courtesy veiled. Jokes about a supposed national disease (which are not quite extirpated yet, since nasty things of all descriptions are the slowest things to die), and sneers concerning the inalienable caution and craft, thrift and penury of the race, were all that was ever heard of the people: and the country was less known than America, or even Japan, is now. Macpherson in Ossian (false or true, the cause of so many controversies) had given a wild fictitious picture of unearthly wastes and mists, cloudy mountains and cruel seas, all melancholy, tragic, monstrous, and incomprehensible, in which the French and other foreign critics found a sentiment thoroughly appropriate to the mystic North, but which the English mind with much unanimity rejected as entirely out of its range, and not much worth investigating. When Burns raised his voice from the heart of this unknown land, there had been a thrill of excited attention and wonder; but Burns was so great a

prodigy in every way, and everything about him was so beyond expectation, that his nationality added only a surprise the more to the standing wonder of his existence at all. And that existence was so brief that the public mind had scarcely time to get over the shock of his appearance in his ploughman guise and peasant language, compelling its attention, and to inquire what manner of race it was which produced such a miracle, when the wonderful rustic disappeared and all was still again. When Scott, in his turn, presented himself with the fine ballad strain of his poems, bringing back the moss-trooper and the border knight, the old picturesque chivalrous court of the Jameses, generous romantic monarchs of a land of romance, the glowing tartans and tragic passion, not wholly above melodrama, of the Highland chieftains, the imagination of the tourist began to be fired — if, indeed, that modern development of man was not created altogether by this new revelation: but still the revelation was very partial. When, however, the first novel of the *Waverley* series came into the world, the curtain rose, as in a theatre, upon Scotland, no longer a rugged North, a conventional country known by certain moral (or immoral) qualities, but for the moment the most distinct and clearly-evident of all the quarters of the earth, the chosen land of all that was humorous and all that was pathetic, full of an unsuspected and inexhaustible variety of character and wealth of emotion. The veil was drawn from her face, not only to other nations, but even to her own astonished and delighted inhabitants,

who had hitherto despised or derided the Highland caterans, but now beheld silently with amazed eyes the real features of their uncomprehended countrymen, just as England and the more distant world awoke to know the "land of the mountain and the flood."

We can understand but dimly at this distance, we who have been brought up upon *Waverley* and scarcely can remember when we first made acquaintance with Tullyveolan and the Highland stronghold among the hills, any more than we can remember when we first set foot in Prospero's enchanted island —it is with difficulty that we can realise the first magical effect. The book was read everywhere by all kinds of people; it flew from hand to hand, and was discussed and talked over as if it had been the personal concern of thousands of readers. "Opinion!" said Lord Holland, when asked his opinion of the new book,—"none of us went to bed all night, and nothing slept but my gout." The verdict was the same in much less lofty regions, wherever a copy could be laid hold of. Rich and poor were as one in the wonderful unanimous commotion. The success of *Waverley* was as great and as sudden as that of the *Lay*, and far more true. Indeed, one can scarcely help thinking that it was some unconscious prescience of this which was coming, and which deserved all fame, that made the public receive those tunings of the minstrel's harp and preludes of his real song so cordially. There were one or two dissentient critics —his own *Quarterly*, the Tory organ which he had helped to originate, being the chief. This periodical,

still in the hands of the captious and bilious Gifford, objected to the use of the Scotch as "a dark dialect of Anglified Erse," unworthy of ears polite. But this little malignant voice had no influence on the universal enthusiasm. Once more Scott's noble clear-headedness, his breadth of honest life, the light and warmth which filled his narrative, opened him a way of access to all hearts. These were not the highest qualities of his genius, but they were the qualities which interpreted his higher imagination to the common soul. He announced no lofty aim, professed no purpose of teaching—yet at a stroke set before the world the most perfect picture of a state of society which was passing, or had passed away; accounted for it, justified it, made it glorious—yet at the same moment proved the impossibility of continuance in the system to which he could not but look back with tender regret: and with a fine candour and honest historical perception which was in advance of his own convictions, showed the crumbling foundations of the changed rule and the inevitable triumph of new lords and new laws to be both necessary and just. Even this valuable historical revelation was, however, but a secondary matter in comparison with the glow of character and human life which illuminated his country under his hand. We have learned nowadays to be very shy of history in the form of tales. But the art was new in those days, and all its details were as fresh and picturesque as the story itself was moving and animated. With his usual modesty, Scott caused it to be represented to Miss Edgeworth that the first suggestion of his work

had been taken from the excellence of hers. Thus, too, according to his own account, William Taylor made him a poet, and that pompous provincial accepted the idea with an evident feeling that it might very well be so. And Miss Edgeworth made him a novelist: but the more subtle Irishwoman did not take the graceful compliment *au pied de la lettre*, nor was it necessary.

And pouring into the world after *Waverley* came the flood of its successors, all instinct with kindred life, proving that no adventitious help of historical excitement was wanted, but that the humblest incidents of common life were enough to furnish at once drama and interest. The cottage of the Mucklebackits, with its simple tragedy, is brought as close to us as the rude hall of the Highland chieftain, and goes even more warmly to our hearts. Scott sets it before us as if he had been studying fishermen and their ways all his life. His sympathy enters into everything. The rustic dalliance on one hand, and on the other that sorrow of the poor which has to be put aside for the necessities of ordinary life, are all open to his sympathetic eye; and with the touch as of a magician's wand he conjures all coarseness out of the one, and teaches us to feel for the petulance of grief restrained —the passion of sorrow which takes the form of irritation—in the other. As the brilliant series flowed on, it was as if each new study was the author's masterpiece; and so powerful was his touch, and so wonderful the stream of illumination which moved with him wherever he moved, that even the conventional and threadbare story of the lost child and his recovery, as a

romantic heir and hero,—a story upon which all kinds of changes have been rung,—became in his hand new again. Meg Merrilees, it must be owned, is melodramatic in the highest degree, but we defy the most cold-blooded reader to follow without excitement the story of those strange events which make Captain Brown into Henry Bertram of Ellangowan; the thread of mystery, for which otherwise we should care little, is spun through and through such a varied and lifelike web of character and incident, that neither Scotland nor we could afford to lose it. Dandie Dinmont (for example) and all his wild pastoral world, the mild and wise gudewife, the generous simple liberality, the shrewdness, not without a touch of guile, and all the relationships of that fresh open-air existence, servants and masters, and litigious neighbours, who would like nothing better than to settle their disputes with singlestick or broadsword, "if your honour thinks it wadna be against the law;" but would not raise the rent upon each other, or step in between their honest enemy and his natural advantage—is such a piece of large and sun-bright creation as could have reached us in no other way. "The Shirra" had noted them all, without knowing, as he went and came through the forest, and by all the moorland ways on Teviot and on Tweed. He saw Meg Merrilees, too, no doubt, some day by the wayside as he rode by. His friendly eye saw everything involuntarily, without intention—whence all the freedom and spontaneous life. "I am a bad hand," he says, "at depicting a hero properly so called, and have an unfortunate propensity for the

dubious characters of borderers, buccaneers, Highland robbers, and all others of a Robin Hood description. I do not know why this should be, as I am myself, like Hamlet, indifferent honest, but I suppose the blood of the old cattle-drivers of Teviotdale continues to stir in my veins." This is a subject of reproach against him by some feeble-minded critics—as if we should find fault with Shakspeare for his Claudios and Bertrams. It was only in our own day that another man of genius boldly put forth the doctrine of a novel without a hero, anticipating criticism by owning the difficulty of embodying the ideal, so as to satisfy our poetic principles, yet keep our interest. Scott did not succeed in this: his Waverley, his Bertram, his Henry Morton, are but very ordinary young fellows. But who else has done better? the *jeune premier* is of all inventions the most hard to manage—infinitely more so than the heroine, who, by right of her womanhood, may possess all the superlative qualities and yet have enough flesh and blood to keep a hold upon our sympathies. A pretty pair of lovers are a necessity universally acknowledged; but so long as they are pretty and spirited and generous, what do we want more? Romeo himself is little more than a gallant shadow, Orlando a long-limbed and picturesque impersonation of youth, not worthy to tie the shoes of that sweetest of all visionary maidens—the wise, the tender, the playful, the capricious, the impassioned Rosalind. We may frankly acknowledge, without any detriment to Scott's reputation, this incapacity, which he shares with the greatest.

But it is impossible to record the unparalleled enthusiasm with which his romances were received, without casting a glance in passing at the revulsion of sentiment which his great countryman Thomas Carlyle was the first to begin, and which has been echoed not only by Carlyle's disciples but by the followers of that new school of analytical fiction which reigns at present in England. Carlyle's indictment against the author of *Waverley* has several counts, the greatest of which are—first, that he had no message to deliver—"wished not the world to elevate itself, to amend itself, to do this or to do that, except simply pay him for the books he kept writing," which we think is an entirely ungenerous and uncalled-for accusation, especially as it is repeated from sentence to sentence, as if money had been for ever in the thoughts of one of the most liberal and generous of men; and second, that he did not create, but "deceptively enacted, as a good player might," the characters he invented, making them "look and talk like what they give themselves out for; but fashioning them from the skin inwards, never getting nearer the heart of them." "The one set," Mr. Carlyle says, meaning the creations of Shakspeare, "become living men and women; the other amount to little more than mechanical cases, deceptively painted automatons." "Not profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for edification, for building up or elevating in any shape!" he adds afterwards of these works, which, as we have endeavoured to point out, opened up Scotland to all the nations of the universe,

and made her national character and faith, her humour, her passion, her daily life, visible to all men. Such a deliverance comes badly from any Scotsman; for it is impossible to us to conceive any such impoverishment of our country as that which would result could Scott and his creations be swept away from her, and could her Lowland plains and Highland hills relapse into the mists that covered them before *Waverley* was. If it is unelevating and unimproving to fill a country with a visionary population, rich in every natural quality, with all the accidents and misadventures—all the tragic troubles and evanescent joys—of life, and not one debasing image, not one impure suggestion, not one setting up of the evil over the good in the whole range, then Scott was unelevating and unimproving; and if it is possible to embody absolute and supreme truth in the homeliest guise with all the effect of an actual history, and to place a simple peasant woman by the side of the Unas and Mirandas, in sheer potency of veracity and love—without virtue and without genius, then let us acknowledge that Scott's motives were mean and his power superficial. It is to ourselves impossible to conceive how the career of Wilhelm Meister, through all the intrigues and fictitious loves of a theatrical company, can be supposed elevating, while the story of Jeanie Deans is set down as mechanical. Mr. Carlyle is[1] a great writer, and we are rash to venture

[1] This was written before the death of Carlyle: it is better that it should remain as written, to show at least that the writer did not shrink during his lifetime from an unwavering opposition on this point to the judgment of a master venerated and beloved.

to defy so great a champion—perhaps even there is something of the coward in striking upon the shield of one who has withdrawn from the field of battle: yet the greatest are but human. Scott chose for his ground of action the moment when the old Scotland and the new were as yet struggling for the mastery. Whether he consciously set before himself the object of proving once for all that his own side had lost the day, and how it had lost the day, we cannot tell,—or whether he intended from the beginning to show the subtle self-seeking which made the insurrection of the clans less noble, and the factious force of personal dislikes and family feuds that made it futile. But that he did so there can be no doubt. Vich Ian Vohr was more than the last of the Highland feudal princes; he was at the same time the ambitious political plotter, whose aim was rendered hopeless by the very craft with which he pursued it; and no historian had ever proved till Scott did how the cause of the Stuarts fell to pieces, how the old world (which he loved) came to decay, how all the elements of life and hope were ranged on the other side. He did this in spite of his sympathies and his principles, and in the very act of throwing the light of poetry and romance over the fallen cause, and attracting to it men's sympathies and charities as they had rarely been attracted before. For literature, save that of ballad and popular song, had never been on the Jacobite side. If history is a noble and dignified branch of literature, this poetical rendering of it, which was far more attractive, far more vivid than

Hume's or Robertson's, can scarcely be stigmatised as containing no elevating or improving power.

And if it is not a bettering influence to show the callous or the indifferent how the hearts of their humbler neighbours can be wrung, and to prove that more true and generous than king or kaiser may be a gillie on the hill or a milkmaiden in the cottage, we wonder what is so. This, too, was Scott's work, whether it was his conscious aim or not. His aim was to tell the manifold story in which he delighted, of his countrymen and kin; he did this orally to all the strangers and pilgrims that intruded upon his leisure and disturbed his rest, but to whom he could not (by stress of nature) be anything but courteous, cordial, and kind. All day long these stories were flowing from his lips with a genial delight in the humours they contained. When put in writing they required a larger framework, a certain mechanism of romance, in which perhaps he was feeble occasionally, as all the greatest have been (so far as plots go, Mr. Wilkie Collins is a greater artist than Shakspeare and Scott put together); but the impulse was the same. There are greater artists, who delight in showing how every good action has some alloy of selfish motive, and every human creature an unworthy side. Is that more noble or more elevating than to open the door of a turf hut and show the deepest human emotions, the most princely generosity, the noblest affections, there? Scott was an aristocrat born; he loved the notice of princes, the fellowship of dukes. He was so weak as to wish, above all things, to leave his

children well off and well endowed, "to establish a family," as people say. He loved the feudal rule, the supremacy of the gentleman, the superiority of race. He was an Edinburgh advocate, a member of a conventional society, very racy and strong, but eminently individual, and with the most marked character and limits. What was it then that made him conceive in homeliest simplicity such a being as that of Jeanie Deans, and set her above all the prettinesses of sentiment, by the side, as we have said, of the Unas and Mirandas? Was any one aware of the very existence of such a home and such an atmosphere as that which made her heavenly virtue possible, before Walter Scott built the gray walls, and led the mild and balmy breathing kine into the byre at St. Leonard's? Perhaps he had seen in his boyish days, as he scrambled up Arthur's Seat with his friend and his book, the old man sitting by the door, his "lyart haffits wearing thin and bare," and heard his slow *tlak*; perhaps even watched his daughter, simple and kind, looking over the little paling, shading her eyes from the slant rays of the westering sun in the long summer nights, looking out for some lingering home-comer — poor Effie or other wanderer;—and years after, when he looked for them, found these types of the old peasant-patriarch and the tender simple woman again. But even with these in his mind, what would any commoner soul have made of it? Victor Hugo's Sister Simplice,—she who was the impersonation of truth,—lied when the moment of trial came to save the fugitive, and was blessed and applauded for the

deed. But noble Jeanie, in her Scotch severity and purity and infinite tenderness, was incapable of this. She could have died easily, but to lie she could not. What we should have said of her if she had not been capable of doing more,—if she had not had the fortitude and the spirit to break through all her habits and modest fears, and win by fair means what she could not attain by foul,—it is difficult to say. Should we have forgiven Jeanie if Effie had died? But, anyhow, the best that Art has made of such a situation in other hands is downfall: the impersonation of virtue has always abandoned her austere career. As soon as the claims of generosity, of mercy, came in, Truth herself has stained her white garments, and the lie has been justified by being called heroic. Only to Scott, who, thus stabbed in the house of his friends, has been accused of having no noble object, no thought of anything but money in his productions,—only to Scott was the higher grace revealed. His kind and simple maiden would have sacrificed even her convictions if she could. But she was incapable of the falsehood. The reader who can stand by, so to speak, in the breathless court, and see all the crowd, eager counsel, rapt spectators, even the Judge upon the bench, waiting to hear the so-excusable fiction, the lie which would have been more than blameless, which would have been heroic—and refuse to be moved, is a being beyond our comprehension; and how our great countryman Carlyle could have forgotten Jeanie is also beyond our understanding. No poet of his period so elevated, so

consecrated the truth. Wordsworth's old man on the moor, who used a manner of speech "such as grave livers do in Scotland use," might claim a certain kindred with douce Davie Deans; but no one has risen to the height of Jeanie save her creator—a man so entirely without pretence, without sham, without any of the theatrical wrappings of a prophet, that even the Seer will scarcely allow him the office—which it was his to perceive under whatsoever disguise.

It is an entirely sophisticated and conventional art which depreciates such a picture as this as being a study of peasant character, and not made among the equals of the author, the more heroic and cultured class, to which it is courtesy to suppose every great writer must belong. The peasant has always a certain advantage over those who are bound by the limits of the conventional, and have to hide their own souls and impulses more scrupulously than is necessary on the other level. Otherwise it is not less but more difficult to embody the highest ideal virtue in a homely exterior. The old censors of art demanded beauty and ideal grace from all that was highest in moral excellence; and it was one of the special features in the literary reformation of which we have been treating, that the favourites of poetic art now, and only now, began to be found in the huts where poor men lie. A beggar maid of matchless beauty had, indeed, always been a well-known figure in poetry, and one of the chosen heroines of the eighteenth century, that special age of the correct, had been the virtuous and well-conducted

Pamela—that pure and prudent maid who came from her humble home to seek advancement, and was so admirably repaid for her virtue. But Scott's humble heroine had more disadvantages than that of her humble condition. "Had this story been conducted by a common hand," says a judicious correspondent, quoted in Lockhart's *Life of Scott*, "Effie would have attracted all our concern and sympathy—Jeanie only cold approbation; whereas Jeanie, without youth, beauty, genius, warm passions, or any other novel-perfection, is here our object from beginning to end." Nothing can be more curious, indeed, than the turn thus given by Scott to what might otherwise have been the most ordinary story of seduction and betrayal. Fiction great and small abounds in such tales—the pretty, vain, foolish girl gone astray, the "villain" who deceives her, the father and sister overwhelmed with shame. Put to it but the usual moral conclusion, the only one possible to the sentimentalist, the "only art" which the lovely woman who has stooped to folly can find her guilt to cover,—and the moralist has no more threadbare subject.

But Scott had a very different inspiration. His achievement is even greater in its way than that by which Shakspeare produced the spotless and lovely Isabella, the emblem of wise and noble purity in the midst of the deepest shame of evil living; for Isabella is as fair as she is pure,—a perfect lily-flower in the gloom of all those machinations with which we can scarcely endure to see her surrounded. But Jeanie is not lovely even in her

excellence, her truth, and infinite tender affection. With the highest poetry of self-devotion in her, she is yet a piece of actual fact, real as the landscape in which she is enclosed, as her kine that browse upon the kindly slopes—yet a creature of the most heroic type, absolutely pure, absolutely truthful, full of a tenderness, forbearance, and long-suffering beyond the power of man, willing to die rather than to lie, but resolute that the truth her nature has forced her to respect shall not be used for harm if her very life can prevent it. And this flower of humanity expands and blooms out its slow sweet blossom, opening before our eyes without one momentary departure from the homely guisé, the homely language, even the matter-of-fact channel in which her thoughts run by nature. She is never made anything different from what the daughter of David Deans, cowfeeder in St. Leonard's, should be. In all her many adventures she is always the same simple, straightforward, untiring one-idead woman—simple, but strong not weak in her simplicity, resisting all unnecessary explanations with a decision and firmness at which the clever, bold, unscrupulous villain of the piece stands aghast. He has not the courage to keep his secret,—he who has the courage to break hearts and prisons; but Jeanie has the courage. There is not one scene in which this high valour of the heart or her absolute sincerity fails her; nor is there one in which she departs ever so little from the lowliness of her beginning. She is as little daunted by the Duke or the Queen as she is by the other difficulties which she meets and surmounts with that

tremulous calm of self-control which belongs to nerves highly strung; nay, she has even a certain modest pleasure in the society of these potentates, her simple soul meeting them with awe, yet, with absolute frankness, making no commonplace attempts at self-assertion. In this particular her humbleness is her strength, and the beautiful unison of a soul so firm and true with the circumstances and habits of a lowly class, brings out all Jeanie's virtues in a clear light of sober independence. Neither her dangers nor the fame and success she has won make for a moment that effect upon her which such experiences would naturally have upon the temperament to which a desire of bettering itself is the chief of human motives. That desire has been the parent of fine deeds, but the mere suggestion of it would have desecrated Jeanie. With a higher and nobler art, the poet has secured her against this danger by her very humility. A poor gentlewoman in the same conditions might have hankered fatally after social elevation, but not so David Deans's daughter. After all, though this climax of her existence is so extraordinary, it is but a little interval in her life, not enough to upset the sweeter balance of her nature, or whisper into her sound brain any extravagance of novel wishes. The accidental and temporary pass away, the perennial and natural remain. Jeanie is greater than rank or gain could make her in the noble simplicity of her nature: and the elevation which is the natural reward of virtue in every fairy tale would be puerile and unworthy of her. The pretty Perdita becomes a

princess by every rule of romance, even when she is not a king's daughter to begin with; but Jeanie is above any such primitive recompense of virtue. She is herself always, which is greater than any princess; and there never was a more exquisite touch than that in which, after her outburst of poetic and pathetic eloquence to the Queen, the very overflowing of her earnest and anxious heart, she sinks serene into herself when the crisis is over, and contemplates Richmond Hill as "braw rich feeding for the cows," the innocent dumb friends of her unchanging soul. This is the true moderation of genius. An inferior workman would have kept Jeanie up at the poetic pitch, and lost her in an attempt to prove the elevating influence of high emotion. Scott knew better; his humble maiden of the fields never ceases for a moment to be the best and highest thing she could be made—herself.

And how lifelike and true are all the accessories—grotesque Dumbiedykes, with a touch of pathos in his imploring appeal to "Jeanie, woman!" and the bustling snuff merchant in London, and the genial patriotic Duke, who speaks like Scott himself, and reminds us of him. Just so would the Sheriff have helped his humble countrywoman, had his been the office, and brought her to speech of his patroness, and given to the natural eloquence of the heart its fit opportunity. Madge Wildfire and her fantastic group interpose an alien note, but they are of the nature of conventional and necessary impedimenta, without which no novel could come into being. And who but

Scott had ever dreamt of setting before the world such a patriarch as David Deans, with his slow discoursings, his drone of far-off spiritual experience, his dogmatism, and the yearning agony of paternal tenderness with which he sat speechless waiting to know whether his daughter would have the strength to save her sister by a falsehood, though nothing on earth would have made him counsel it? All this is of a strain of simple nature and emotion which we are fain to think above and not below the long-drawn investigations of the analyst who takes humanity to pieces to let us see how its mechanism works. And few historical scenes have ever been put on any canvas like that rapid picture of the Edinburgh mob, in its sudden passion of wrath and vengeance, lit up by the red glare of fire and torch, hanging its victim with a determined judicial gravity and calm, then dispersing as it came together in mystery and silence, untraced and unknown. The *Heart of Mid-Lothian* is not a perfect book. The scenes among the thieves and the apparition of Madge Wildfire are, like the similar scenes in *Guy Mannering*, far-fetched and melodramatic; and the later part of the book, after Jeanie's marriage, is cumbrous and unnecessary. But, with all its faults, we know not where to find another worthy to be placed beside it; nowhere a more life-like historical scene, or better representation of the old city which has changed so entirely, the old characteristic, stern, and high-handed mob; nor, what is of still greater importance, do we know anywhere a heart or a mission like those of Jeanie, so free from

all alloy, so altogether natural yet ideal, so simple and spotless, so unspeakably true. Walter Scott, with all his traditions,—a born aristocrat, a son of the old regime, a Jacobite, a lawyer, and a man of worldly wisdom,—was as far apart as could be conceived from the cowfeeder's daughter, the rustic milk maiden, Whig, Cameronian, plebeian. No natural sympathy connected these two, except the sympathy of genius with everything that is highest and purest; whence was it, then, that the man whose every thought was so different divined this noble silent soul, by far the finest image of unblemished truth and virtue that his generation had so much as dreamed of? Who can tell? The secret was between him and heaven. And if this was not creation, then we are incapable even of comprehending what poetic creation means.

We take the *Heart of Mid-Lothian* as one of the best types of Scott's work. It has the characteristic defects of machinery which perhaps haste, and perhaps a certain contempt for the accessories of an art which he had so to speak picked up accidentally, and neither studied nor been trained in, betrayed him into. But it has the finest and most complete ideal of any of his books, and its secondary characters give a sufficiently just idea of the wealth of variety and life which was in him—though in this particular several of his other works, such as *Waverley*, *Rob Roy*, and the *Antiquary*, are perhaps superior. In all of these there are the same drawbacks of an unwilling and melodramatic mystery which he evidently

considered to be needed for the interest of the tale,—in one Meg Merrilees, in another Madge Wildfire, in the third the fictitious woe and tragedy of the Glenallans. These give occasion for picturesque scenes, and excite the mind of the primitive and unsophisticated reader; but the critic regrets the supposed necessity for their existence, and the Glossins and Dirk Hatteraicks are a sad interruption to our unmingled enjoyment of Dandie Dinmont, and even of Jock Jabos. This weakness disappears more or less whenever Scott has a historical centre from which to work, and which furnishes the necessary tragic elements. It has no place in *Waverley*, *Old Mortality*, or any of the special historical works. So far as this goes, however, Scott cannot be defended from the charge of carelessness. In fact, he did not care for such secondary matters; he gave up even his heroes to the critical knife with scarcely a sigh. Waverley he allowed to be "a sneaking piece of imbecility." He was not careful, like a good workman, of all his proportions, but did what he was modestly aware he could do *con amore*, and left the rest to fate. Laborious workman as he was,—and nothing perhaps has more detracted from Scott's merits among those who look upon the pains of production as necessary, and a total derangement of stomach and liver as becoming adjuncts to a poetic career, than his healthy and straightforward work,—he yet had so much of the caprice of a creator as to divide his care very unequally, bestowing his full attention where he felt it to be most effective, and hurrying over with half con-

temptuous commonplace the portions which he no doubt supposed were to satisfy the commonplace portion of his audience. In one part, accordingly, the picture is set forth with the most affectionate particularity; in another, though his eye for picturesque effects was so keen that he could not miss them, it is dashed upon the careless page with a conviction that only the easily satisfied will linger upon it, and that for them no special trouble was necessary: a method which certainly does not come up to the requirements of the modern "conscientious" standard.

From 1814 to 1825 Scott was at the height of a glorious and prosperous career. The *Lord of the Isles* had been a disappointment, but he had shaken off the momentary fret with all the more ease that *Waverley* by this time had moved the world to enthusiasm and he had fairly entered upon his new path. After this all seemed to go well with him. During these crowning years of his life and genius he wrote book after book, one more warmly received, more enthusiastically admired, than another. He bought land, laying field to field; he built and ornamented, and dressed out to his heart's desire with every nick-nack he could think of, the house of Abbotsford; he was fêted and made much of wherever he went, princes and poets conspiring which would do him the greatest honour; he became a baronet; a stream of perpetual worshippers flowed from all the corners of the earth to his house. Never was there a more prosperous, wealthy, and joyful career, so far as the world was aware. That all the time below this

he was struggling to bolster up a fictitious business, to pay accommodation bills, to meet the continually recurring crises of commercial difficulty, nobody knew except the booksellers, with whom he was inextricably involved, the extraordinary happy-go-lucky firm of the Ballantynes, and the almost equally rash and more high-handed Constable. The system of business carried on by the two brothers of the printing office. seems incredible; and that anything so wild could have existed with an outward aspect of success for years is unaccountable. One partner correcting proofs in a snug room apart, while the printing house swung on in space as fortune pleased, the other meeting every new demand with a new bill,—only a farce could do justice to this most tragic career, which involved despair and suffering unspeakable to the one nobly honest and honourable workman who stood among them maintaining all with his right hand. That Scott should have allowed such a system to go on is another of the points in the matter which is beyond explanation; but it is very evident that he did so, and though he was himself fully conscious of the terrible drain upon him, no one else was, and his purchases and expenditure seemed to the outside world reasonable and natural enough. They were, so far as we can see, perfectly reasonable, had there not been that private drain behind, that miserable mystery of the undisclosed partnership; and everybody concerned seems to have had an extraordinary power of putting this out of sight, concealing the inevitable as it ripened towards destruction, and living as if it

were not perfectly certain that sooner or later an end must come.

Before this end came, however, we repeat, Scott had not only a most full and animated, but a happy life. Though there are times in which the soul is ready to say with Francesca that the recollection of happiness is the greatest of woes, yet on the other hand the mind demands, during our earthly career—between the early struggles of the beginning and the unfailing sorrows of age—that a man should have his day. It is a demand we make both for ourselves and others with the strenuous force of almost indignation. So long as that has been, humanity, no way over-estimating its own sad chances, acquiesces with a sombre content in the clouds and darkness which come after. And Sir Walter (as he now was) had his day. He got the desire of his heart. He was happy in his life, in his surroundings, in his children, in the home he loved. Why his desire for that home, which he would so fain have left to his son, and his son's son after him, should have been made the subject of invariable censure, we confess we are unable to divine. He would rather have been a Scotch laird than the author of *Waverley*, people say, never thinking that one of his great charms as a man was his noble modesty about this authorship of *Waverley*, his genial and gentle way of ignoring his own greatness and setting every humble scribbler at his ease. He, if the world would but admit it, was always Walter Scott to himself, and not the author of *Waverley*. He was a man, a kindly Scot, the father of young

Walter, the son of a race every man of which would have had a footing on Tweedside if he could, rather than any other advancement. He was the most liberal, hospitable, princely of men. He liked to keep open house, to shed bounty all around him; receiving was little in his way, but giving much. Even had he stood upon his genius more than it was in him to do, he was of a nature which revolted at patronage, which could never with pleasure have played the lion in great men's houses, or sustained the bestowal of those flatteries which, like all alms, are more or less humiliating. If the world chose to stare and applaud, let it come then to his never closed door and pay its homage if it would. The Sheriff, the laird, the kindly master of the soil, could there shake off all exaggerations, and make the flatterers, if any good were in them, honest friends without wounding their pride by a harsh refusal of their worship. And leave it to his children after him — who does not wish to do so? It is the most natural, and, whenever it succeeds, the most laudable of desires. Why Sir Walter should have been upbraided with his Abbotsford we have never been able to divine. What he was really to be reproached with was that secret partnership which drained away his heart's blood, which he treated like the fabled ostrich, thrusting his head into the sand that he might not see the danger.

In his exculpation on this point it is impossible to say more than that there is something in the flood of commercial affairs which seems to carry even

those to the manner born, away from all their moorings; miraculous tidings-over, sudden fluctuations from loss to gain, hair's-breadth 'scapes which are intoxicating, and in their excitement seem to obliterate all sounder sense, and create an impression that just so, in a whirl of miracle and prodigies,—anxieties that are made almost attractive by the intense pleasure of relief,—the adventurers may go on for ever and always evade the conclusion. Those who are thus deceived invariably find that the conclusion at last cannot be avoided—and so did Scott. Yet there was a time when his life was very happy, and nobody suspected that the famous author whose works brought him to all appearance as much as he could wish for —a Fortunatus's purse always refilled—had any anxiety at all to cloud his career and remind him that his happiness might soon come to an end. We must add the following little sketch of the way in which he spent his days. It is somewhat personal to Lockhart, the narrator, and embraced his own experiences as well as those of the subject of his biography:—

"At Chiefswood (a cottage near Abbotsford) my wife and I spent the summer and autumn of 1821, the first of several seasons which will ever dwell in my memory as the happiest of my life. We were near enough Abbotsford to partake as often as we liked of its brilliant society, yet could do so without being exposed to the worry and exhaustion of spirit which the daily reception of new-comers entailed upon all the family except Sir Walter himself. But in truth even he was not always proof against the annoyances connected with such a style of open-housekeeping. Even his temper sank sometimes under

the solemn applauses of learned dulness, the vapid raptures of painted and periwigged dowagers, the horse-leech avidity with which underbred foreigners urged their questions, and the pompous simper of condescending magnates. When sore beset at home in this way he would every now and then discover that he had some very particular business to attend to on an outlying part of his estate, and, craving the indulgence of his guests overnight, appear at the cabin in the glen before its inhabitants were astir in the morning. The clatter of Sybil Grey's hoofs, the yelping of Mustard and Spice, and his own joyous shout of *reveillé* under our windows, were the signal that he had burst his toils and meant for that day to take his 'ease in his inn.' On descending he was to be found seated, with all his dogs and ours about him, under a spreading ash that overshadowed half the bank behind the cottage and the park, pointing the edge of his woodman's axe for himself, and listening to Tom Purdie's lecture touching the plantation 'that most needed thinning. After breakfast he would take possession of a dining-room upstairs and write a chapter of the *Pirate*, and then, having made up and despatched his parcel for Mr. Ballantyne, away to join Purdie wherever the foresters were at work, and sometimes to labour among them, until it was time either to rejoin his own party at Abbotsford or the quiet circle of the cottage. When his guests were few and friendly, he often made them come over and meet him at Chiefswood in a body towards evening; and surely he never appeared to more amiable advantage than when helping his young people with their little arrangements upon such occasions. He was ready with all sorts of devices to supply the wants of a narrow establishment; he used to delight particularly in sinking the wine in a well under the brae ere he went out, and hauling up the basket just before dinner was announced—this primitive process being, he said, what he had always practised when a young housekeeper, and in his opinion far superior in its results to any application of ice; and in the same spirit, whenever the weather was sufficiently genial, he voted for dining out of doors altogether, which at once got rid of the inconvenience of very small rooms, and made it

natural and easy for the gentlemen to help the ladies, so that the paucity of servants went for nothing."

Thus Scott lived among the woods which were so dear to him, to which he would escape when the babble of adulation or the endless talk of books, that every visitor no doubt thought necessary conversation for the great author, got too much for him. If he had passed his days in a frenzy of composition, perhaps we should have thought more of him. During that summer, his son-in-law goes on to inform us, one of the most faithful friends of his life, William Erskine,—a man whom Scott "respected, trusted, and loved, much as an affectionate husband does the wife who gave him her heart in her youth, and thinks his thoughts rather than her own in the evening of life," and who on his side had "merged all his literary ambition, active and aspiring, at the outset" in Scott and his works,—was with him, specially aiding with his local knowledge in the locality and descriptions of the *Pirate*, which happened to be the book then on the stocks. This was the man who saw the first chapters of *Waverley* and thought them dull, and dismissed them to that drawer in the cabinet where Scott found them at last among his fishing tackle. But one mistake of this kind may be made by any man, and it does not seem to have lessened Scott's confidence in his life-long friend. As he wrote, the manuscript was handed over to this tried and loved, though not always infallible, adviser. "Sir Walter used to give him at breakfast the pages he had written that morning; and very commonly,

while he was again at work in his study, Erskine would walk over to Chiefswood that he might have the pleasure of reading them aloud to my wife and me under our favourite tree. . . . I cannot paint the pride and delight with which he acquitted himself on these occasions."

Thus surrounded with people who loved him—not one of his workmen or retainers but was the friend of half a lifetime at least,—Tom Purdie, loitering about the plantations, being no less devoted and faithful than William Erskine reading the manuscript with glistening eyes—Scott lived for many happy years. He turned no pilgrims from his doors, but entertained with his best every stranger that appeared, pouring forth in genial talk the germs of a hundred novels, never thrifty of anecdote or tale,—the born story-teller of his age, more delightful by word of mouth than even in print. If such a gift is not a worthy one, then all the instincts of the race are at fault, and one of the chief delights of life a mistake. But Scott was too genuine for any pose of authorship or theatrical pomp of genius. His art was to conceal his art, and persuade if possible all his listeners that they were as good as he. No doubt Shakspeare did the same; and had we a detailed biography of him, we should feel the absence of the fine frenzy, the throes and convulsions, which ought to accompany the birth of poetry. Nobody certainly will find them in Scott; but at the same time we have but to turn to the sad musings of his last years to feel that his work and his utterance, so seeming easy in the flush of his strength

and fame, were anything but matters of indifferent routine to him. At a moment of miserable anticipation, when he thought nothing better than to be overwhelmed in the flood of pecuniary troubles, it is thus he contemplates his position with a sadness almost beyond words:—"For myself, if things go badly in London, the magic wand of the Unknown will be shivered in his grasp. He must then, faith, be termed the Too-well-Known. The feast of fancy will be over with the feeling of independence. He will no longer have the delight of waking in the morning with bright ideas in his mind, hasten to commit them to paper, and count them monthly, as the means of planting such scaurs and purchasing such wastes, replacing dreams of fiction by other prospective visions of walks by

> 'Fountain heads, and pathless groves;
> Places which pale passion loves.'"

Thus Scott separated in his mind the happy idea of carrying out one set of dreams through another, the "visioned walks," by the "bright ideas," the "feast of fancy" from that "general knowledge that an author is working for his bread," which he describes as "degrading him and his productions in the public eye," and reducing him into "the second rank of estimation." This, he says, "is a bitter thought, and if tears start at it let them flow."

In the meantime, for eleven brilliant years the stream ran on. Nobody will say that the Waverley Novels are equal in merit, or expect from any series that it should be so. Early in Scott's career occurred

the partial failure of the *Black Dwarf*, one of the least attractive of his productions; and though he made up his lost way in *Old Mortality* which accompanied it, yet it was a bold undertaking to affront, as he did in that tale, the prejudices of Scotland with such a view of the forefathers of whom the nation, even when it had outgrown them, was still proud. He made what was very much a fresh start and new beginning in *Ivanhoe*, a book which never can be ranked with his highest achievements, but yet never, we think, can lose its ground as one of the most delightful of historical romances, doubtful though their witchery has got to be. As to this division of his work, however, we must remember that he was the first in the field, that modern historical romances were not in his day, or at least had not risen above the level of *The Scottish Chiefs* and *Thaddeus of Warsaw*. Nothing could be more picturesque and animated than the panorama of brilliant and highly-coloured mediæval life thus made to pass before us; and in the companion romances of the *Betrothed* and the *Talisman* there is a higher quality, a tragic element, which no true critic will undervalue. It is, however, upon Scott's early studies of the life of his own country, and what we have ventured to call his revelation of that country to the other nations of the earth, that his fame will always rest. Taken all in all, no such unbroken line of worthy and often brilliant work has been left by any other workman in this region of literature. They have done more to brighten the

world, to soothe the weary, to elevate the standard of general, and what, if the reader pleases, we may call commonplace excellence, than any other works of fiction the world has ever seen. Not a word in them all has ever insinuated evil or palliated dishonour. Truth so honest and so spontaneous that it is unconscious of any merit, yet sometimes, as in the case of Jeanie Deans, already discussed, rising to such a heroic height as poetry has rarely if ever attempted, is the very atmosphere in them. And though good sense and judgment could not be absent from the wholesome and natural man whom Walter Scott delighted to draw, the loftier qualities of generosity and chivalrous devotion were never wanting. When Evan Dhu looks round the fatal court at Carlisle, and asks sternly "if the Saxon gentlemen are laughing" at his proposal to bring six men of the clan—himself the first—to die for Vich Ian Vohr, is there any heart that does not swell with a pang of sympathy? Throughout these books, the losing cause is that to which men stand with unbounded courage; the friend in trouble is he to whom they stick with kindness more sure than a brother's. There is no lack of the caution, the prudence, the guile, that has been long said to be characteristic of Scotland; but even Cuddie Headrigg, the typical Scottish peasant, chary of trouble, and easily persuaded to his own interest, snatches up a gun and follows his master at the supreme moment, indifferent at once to danger and to Jenny. These are the common people of Scott's multitudinous creations.

His heroes are poor creatures, not in sentiment, but from the inherent disadvantages of their position, and the difficulty which he, in common with most other poets, has found in giving substance to the youthful ideal; and his sentiment, if always genuine, is too straightforward and simple to afford much ground for the complications which a more sophisticated intelligence loves. Passion has but little to do with his themes; when it appears, it is the passion of patriotism, of love for a cause rather than for an individual. Love is to him dutiful, tender, devoted, but never an over-mastering emotion for which the world would be well lost. When he began to write novels he was no longer in the sentimental period, and perhaps this has had some effect in sobering his tone; but nothing which was beyond a brave man's power of control was congenial to Scott's thoughts. Only in humour does he give full and boundless scope to his fancy. He has his eyes opened in this way to everything that crosses his sphere of vision. Eccentricities of the vulgar type,—beings out of tune with life, creations eldritch and abnormal, have little attraction for him; but all the whims and twists of tender nature, the turn this way or that way of the mind and fancy, the individual lights that throw variety upon every scene, the fun, the jest, the endless links of feeling and of folly, the entanglements of the serious and the ridiculous, the droll aspects which gravity itself puts on, the ludicrous predicaments of circumstances,—these were never lost upon him. And no man has ever seen with more genial vision that mingling

of noble qualities with absurd weaknesses which humourists love. Not like Sterne, working out with lingering and delicate detail every trait of character, and framing perfection in graceful oddities of habit, old-world dress and custom, and primitive sincerity, open to every imposition; but rather with a luminous perception of every man "ganging his ain gait," and all the wonderful curves and diversities of path through which he does so, and an amused affectionate sense of the special foibles, broken bits of folly and wisdom, obstinacies, prejudices, absurdities, which envelop here and there the best heart and nature. His insight here was unbounded, for he knew the race he set forth in all their varieties, and had seen below the surface all their quips and cranks of being from his earliest days, being always an unconscious observer, and above all a friend and lover of his countrymen and humankind.

His novels brought Scott more money than literature had ever brought before, — money destined, as has been seen, with a delightful self-delusion and refinement, to "plant scaurs," not to increase his dignity and importance and make a Tweedside laird of him, according to the version of the vulgar. If it did not turn his noble head to be thus able to win money at his will, it did turn the heads of all connected with him in the business built upon the workings of his brain. The booksellers seem to have considered the fountain inexhaustible, and to have calculated as upon solid capital on his power of producing what the public wanted, and meet-

ing every vagary of its taste and favour. Never was there such a romance of trade as that which these dazzled and intoxicated men carried on at his expense, always confident that some new effort on his part would clear away every difficulty. When a new book was ready, a jovial dinner or supper was the first preliminary; and after the fun had begun to wax fast and furious, the guests, all intent and holding fast by their wits for the emergency, notwithstanding claret and toddy, were allowed to know the name, and perhaps to have a chapter read from the proofs, James Ballantyne being the prophet who communicated these oracles to man. This strangest and most unbusiness-like of printers was, indeed, Scott's interpreter in more ways than one. He spent his life over the hasty manuscripts and proofs. He was the critic, if not in words, yet by involuntary revelations, of the feeling which it was his mission to sound and fathom out of doors—a sort of literary henchman, as entirely devoted to his chief as Evan Dhu to Fergus MacIvor. Unfortunately, Constable, though a better man of business, and with some real foundation to go upon, was not much wiser than his coadjutors. He too became excited by the possession of this strange slave of genius, who went on at his magic loom while other men slept, and threatened to fill the world with those glittering webs which brightened everything around—the face of the country, and the aspect of society, and the balance at the bank. When, after so much wild trading upon credit, so many rash and unwise speculations in literature, and daring play with

danger, the shock came at last, and the Edinburgh printing house and publishing office came down together, their ruin precipitated by the failure of an English correspondent and agent, Constable could not believe that the name he had to conjure withal was not enough to overcome all his foes. He wanted, it is said, to go to the Bank of England and borrow from one hundred to two hundred thousand pounds on the security of his possession of the author of *Waverley*—mortgaging, as it were, this estate which was to him the most certain and inexhaustible of all quarries and mines of gold.

It is a proof at once of Scott's extraordinary power over the imaginations of those surrounding him, and of the bewildering excitement and fever heat at which one brilliant success after another held them, that such an idea could have entered into the mind of mortal man. Scott was to these men what the subject spirit of his own story was to Michael Scott; but with this difference, that whereas the Wizard was embarrassed by the too rapid accomplishment of all his wishes, and had soon no mountain to be cleft in twain or sea sand to be twisted into ropes, Constable and the Ballantynes felt that they had nothing to do but to pass on to the public the constant product of his toil, the more the better, and build upon the endless increase of a power which they did not attempt to gauge, which they never seem to have thought of as likely to be affected by distress or anxiety or pain, like that of other men. Had he, one is tempted to think, kept clear of these knights-errant of the

bookselling trade,—had he been in the hands of a Blackwood or a Murray, born to success, what a different end had been that of the Magician, the great improvisatore of an entranced and wondering age! Then had he built his towers and planted his scaurs in peace, then had his charmed doors stood open for the comfort and solace of all pilgrims, then had the world applauded all his gentle ambitions; and sworn by its right hand that never was nobler issue of a poet's labours than that poetic castle and those beloved woods on Tweedside. But when the spectres of bankruptcy and ruin came, the real defaulters sank into insignificance, and Scott had all to pay, not only in his purse and person, but in his fame, in his favourite pursuits, in Abbotsford and all its hospitalities and hopes. We cannot but think that there is no circumstance in his life more cruel than that which has made so legitimate a desire, so habitual and blameless an ambition, his reproach and almost shame. Abbotsford would not have ruined him had not trade swept all this recompense of his labours into its devouring current. And he might have tranquilly enjoyed all the honours he loved but for his tenderheartedness towards his old schoolfellow, but for his loyal faithfulness to the "trade" which for years had filled his life with the hazards and excitements of a failing fight.

The end of this wonderful career is too well known to demand repetition. When the ruin of the booksellers was no longer to be averted, and when his own astonished family and the larger circle of the

world out of doors learnt how Scott was involved with them, he met the downfall with a heroism which nothing in the history of literature has ever equalled. "Nobody in the end can lose a penny by me," is almost the first comment he makes when the terrible news falls on his ears. Nothing can be more soberly sad, and yet brave, than the tone of his journal, though now and then it rises into a momentary wondering appeal to heaven and earth, or drops into a musing melancholy over his lost fortunes, which is so tragically calm that it is impossible to read it unmoved. "Poor Will Laidlaw! poor Tom Purdie," he cries, "such news will wring your hearts, and many a poor fellow's besides, to whom my prosperity was daily bread." Then, with that immediate return to the thought of something to be done, which shows the mettle of the courageous soul, he sets himself to what is before him. Now that he has at last fairly faced the situation, he will have no tidings-over, no fresh borrowings. "I feel quite composed and determined to labour," he says; and when he records "a sleepless night" and a body out of sorts—"*Mais pourtant cultivons notre jardin.* The public favour is my only lottery. I have long enjoyed the foremost prize, and something in my breast tells me my evil genius will not overtake me if I stand by myself." . . . Then he adds, with a break in his valiant voice, "I have walked my last on the domains I have planted; sate the last time in the house I have built. But death would have taken them from me if misfortune had spared them. My

poor people whom I loved so well! There is just another dice to turn up against me in this run of ill luck—*i.e.* if I should break my magic wand in the fall from this elephant, and lose my popularity. Then Woodstock and Boney may both go to the papermaker, and I may take to smoking cigars and drinking grog. In prospect of absolute ruin I wonder if they would let me leave the Court of Session? I would like, methinks, to go abroad 'and lay my bones far from the Tweed.' I will not yield without a fight for it. It is odd when I set myself to work doggedly, as Dr. Johnson would say, I am exactly the same man as I ever was—neither low-spirited nor distrait. In prosperous times I have sometimes felt my fancy and powers of language flag, but adversity is to me at heart a tonic and a bracer; the fountain is awakened from its inmost recesses. . . . Poor Mr. Pole, the harper, has sent to offer me £500 or £600, probably his all. But I will involve no friend, rich or poor." . . . "O Invention, rouse thyself" (he cries after this); "may man be kind, may God be propitious!" . . . Nothing more heartrending was ever put in print. He was fifty-four and had been ill, and was pulled up suddenly with a shock which might have broken a less valiant spirit in the midst of his easy and happy life. For a day or two even his steady hand was paralysed; but presently began again with something more near passion than had ever moved him before. One thing affects him pitifully, the most painful of all: "The worst is I never know when I am right or wrong; and Ballantyne, who does know in some

degree, will fear to tell me." Who, indeed, in such a crisis would have had the heart to say to him that his gift had forsaken him, and his spell was over?

He goes on to say that what he would advise a client to do in such a circumstance would be to have himself made a bankrupt. "But for this," he cries, "in a court of honour I would deserve to lose my spurs. No; if they will permit me I will be their vassal for life, and dig in the mine of my imagination to find diamonds (or what may sell for such) to make good my engagements, not to enrich myself. And this from no reluctance to be called the Insolvent, which I probably am, but because I will not put out of the power of my creditors the resources, mental or literary, which yet remain in me." What an enterprise was this! to dig in the mine of imagination—with the thought coming always back to him, a terrible possibility, that the mine was exhausted—for thousands and thousands of pounds with which to pay the debts of a trading firm. But Scott did not shrink from it. "Give me my popularity (*an awful postulate!*), and all my present difficulties shall be a joke in four years," he cries. If he wrote too easily, too lightly, out of the fulness of his heart before, it was with tragic earnestness that he betook himself now to that quarry which, alas! was not inexhaustible. *Woodstock* was the book he was writing at the moment—that and the *Life of Napoleon*. The one produced for him—that being the chief matter to be thought of in this crisis—£8000; the other £18,000. Between them they were little more

than a year's work. The *Life of Napoleon*, if not an extraordinary effort of genius, has at least held its place in literature among the many revelations more instructive and graphic of that wonderful life. And *Woodstock*, too, found its niche if not in the highest rank at least on a level more dignified than that of any other existing novelist; while in the introduction to the *Chronicles of the Canongate*, which followed, there was much that was worthy of his best days, and one heartrending picture of a paralytic invalid, in which his own end was shadowed forth. This was followed by the *Fair Maid of Perth*, *Anne of Geierstein*, and the *Tales of a Grandfather*, one of the books which has achieved a gentle immortality worthy of its name.

But all these productions were as nothing to the far nobler work, the chapter of heroic life, which Scott was inscribing through all those weary days in the annals of his country. His lonely anguish, his determined hope, his chill of doubting, lest perhaps his magic should have failed him; his work, never relinquished, sped forward day by day with resolute patience, with stern subdual of all the lingering thoughts and regrets that struggled in—often not satisfying him, often perplexing him with apprehensions, but never slackened;—this is a story such as no man had ever lived and told. The bosom contracts, the "climbing sorrow" mounts into the reader's throat, as the wonderful record passes before his eyes. It does not give any adequate expression to our feelings to say, as Lock-

hart does with just pride, that in two years this gigantic struggle had produced £40,000 with which to satisfy the creditors' claims—which indeed was a miracle—but a poor miracle in comparison with the worker himself who performed it. He might have saved himself all this, and gone free without even the loss of his estate, which was secured by his son's marriage settlement, but that he would not deprive his creditors of "the resources, mental and literary," on which he thought they had a right to calculate. This it is, and not the gains, which makes the last chapter of Scott's life one of the most noble known to man. Those musing reminiscences of Crystal Croftangry, so like himself, yet so subdued, so sadly prophetic, might have been written in his blood; and when we remember, which by this time the reader seldom does, the darkness and sorrow and humiliation, yet noble pride and independence out of which they came, it is hard to read them without tears.

The struggle was heroic for all concerned. The servants stood by their master with a faithfulness which is rarely seen. The butler became man of all work, protesting with tears that he would not leave his master, wages or no wages. The dignified coachman and his pet horses turned to, like their master, and worked on the farm. When Scott saw this sight a broken cry of pleasure and pain came from him. "Auld Pepe's whistling at his darg," he said. "The honest fellow said a yoking in a deep field would do baith him and the blackies good. If things get round

with me, easy shall be Pepe's cushion!" Thus even the serving men were inspired, and nothing could show more clearly the brotherhood and tender friendship that united the household.

But labour and anxiety and sorrow are bad companions. When the pressure began to lighten a little, the overstrained brain at last gave way. He had several slight fits of paralysis in rapid succession, and at last was obliged almost completely to lay down the pen, though never entirely. He went to Italy for his health, and roamed about with lack-lustre countenance, yet now and then a gleam of dying light, all other anxieties at last verging in that of getting back to Tweedside, to lay his bones by the beloved river; for, some time before a bountiful and tender heaven had breathed upon his worn brain the kind delusion that he had paid off all his debts, and was once more a free man. The other mercy vouchsafed to him was that he lived to get safely home, and there died in September 1832, sixty-one years old. The last incident in his life was a characteristic one. After one of the broken slumbers of weakness, he awoke, and starting up suddenly in his chair, exclaimed,—

"'This is sad idleness; I shall forget what I have been thinking of if I don't set it down now. Take me into my own room, and fetch the keys of my desk.' He repeated this so earnestly that we could not refuse. His daughter went into his study, opened his writing desk, and laid paper and pens in the usual order; and I then moved him through the hall, and into the spot where he had always been accustomed to work. When the chair was placed at the desk, and he found himself in the

old position, he smiled and thanked us, and said, 'Now give me my pen and leave me for a little to myself.' Sophia put the pen into his hand, and he endeavoured to close his fingers upon it, but they refused their office—it dropped upon the paper. He sank back among his pillows—silent tears rolling down his cheeks; but, composing himself, by-and-by motioned to me to wheel him out of doors again. Laidlaw met us at the porch and took his turn at the chair. Sir Walter after a little while again dropt into slumber. When he was awaking Laidlaw said to me, 'Sir Walter has had a little repose.' 'No, Willie,' said he, 'no repose for Sir Walter but in the grave.' The tears again rushed from his eyes. 'Friends,' said he, 'don't let me expose myself; get me to bed—that's the only place.'"

Thus the long tragedy came to an end. A sadder yet more noble tale was never written. There have been hesitations about the continuance of the extraordinary fame which his own generation bestowed upon Scott with such fulness and unanimity as fell to the lot of no other man; but there has been no hesitation about the man and the life thus ended. It may, however, strike the reader, as it does the writer, that there is a certain want both of generosity and justice in the praise sometimes bestowed upon himself at the expense of his work. We may afford to waive that work aside, and give our careless plaudits to the man, celebrating his "health" and "sanity," as the jargon goes, at the expense of his genius, when we find anything worthy to place beside that work, or which can give us half the genial crowd of honest friends, the animated faces, the unforgotten converse, the humour and the wisdom and the noble sentiment, the manly honour and womanly truth, the free and delightful play of fancy which we find in it. Among the

agencies that have made Scotland, once so rude and poor, the most prosperous of countries, it is injustice indeed to exclude this one—the warm and tender and living portraiture of her characteristic features, which first made her the acquaintance, the kindly friend and hostess, the admiration of an astonished world. We know no other writer who has done for his country what Sir Walter did for his, unless we seek that writer in a rank above the highest which we dare claim for our beloved romancer and historian—in the larger sphere of Shakspeare, or in the narrow but intensest circle of Dante. We do not claim for him a place beside the poet of England or him of Florence. But being his superiors, they are the only names, which, on their higher level, are his equals in this which he did for his country and for his race.

WALTER SCOTT, born 1771; died 1832.

Published Translations, Bürger's Lenore, etc., 1796.
———— Goetz von Berlichingen, 1799.
Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border, 1802.
Lay of the Last Minstrel, 1805.
Marmion, 1808.
The Lady of the Lake, 1810.
The Vision of Don Roderick, 1811.
Rokeby, Bridal of Triermain } 1813.
Lord of the Isles, 1814.
Field of Waterloo, 1815.
Harold the Dauntless, 1817.

Waverley, 1814.
Guy Mannering, 1815.
The Antiquary, 1816.

Published The Black Dwarf—Old Mortality, 1816.
Rob Roy
The Heart of Midlothian } 1818.
The Bride of Lammermoor—Legend of Montrose, 1819.
Ivanhoe, 1820.
The Monastery
The Abbot } 1820.
Kenilworth
The Pirate } 1821.
The Fortunes of Nigel, 1822.
Peveril of the Peak
Quentin Durward } 1823.
St. Ronan's Well
Redgauntlet, 1824.
Tales of the Crusaders (Betrothed and Talisman), 1825.
Woodstock, 1826.
Chronicles of the Canongate (Two Drovers, Surgeon's Daughter, Highland Widow), 1828.
The Fair Maid of Perth, 1828.
Anne of Geierstein, 1829.
Count Robert of Paris—Castle Dangerous, 1831.

Life of Napoleon, 1827.
Tales of a Grandfather.
History of Scotland (Lardner's Encyclopædia).
Letters on Demonology.

JOHN LEYDEN, born 1775; died 1811.
Published Scenes of Infancy, 1802.

CHAPTER IV.

THOMAS CAMPBELL: AND THE LESSER LIGHTS IN SCOTLAND.

THE name of another poet, celebrated in his own immediate days with an admiration which has much failed him now, must be added to the Northern group before we proceed to the somewhat younger band who had risen upon the horizon before Wordsworth had yet gained anything like a due acknowledgment, and while Scott was still in his poetical stage. Thomas Campbell was the son of an Argyllshire family with some pretensions to gentility, which, however, had faded sadly before his day. His father was a merchant whose trade had been ruined by the American war, and it was in a very poor and limited home that the young poet was brought up. He was born in July 1777, and was therefore very near the age of the greater poets, his contemporaries. Very seldom in the history of time has a single decade proved so fruitful in genius as that which began in 1770 with Wordsworth. Campbell began his life with all the promise of excellence which might have ushered in a much greater man. He had, notwithstanding the poverty of his parents, the best education Glasgow

could furnish, and distinguished himself much as a scholar. He seems almost to have lisped in numbers, and wrote verses which were very correct, and not without merit, when he was ten years old. He grew up, however, into a somewhat uncertain and shifty youth, having no profession, and a temperament such as has always been called poetical,—a sensitive, irritable, easily-wounded and intensely-feeling nature, which could not exist without emotion. The chief thing known about him in his early days is his susceptibility to friendship. The long and not very interesting biography of him which we owe to Dr. Beattie is principally made up of equally long and scarcely more interesting letters to his young friends, in which the attachment is more apparent than the genius. His first poem was suggested, we are told, by the gentle elegance of the *Pleasures of Memory*, which he read in the stern island of Mull when languishing there in a tutorship, and cultivating everything that reminded him of scenes more genial. These were still the days when the pleasures of an abstract quality of the mind seemed, to a dutiful intelligence trained in poetical traditions, to be a fine subject for a poem. Campbell had already a reputation as "the Pope" of Glasgow—specially arising from a prize poem entitled an *Essay on the Origin of Evil*, which was thought to be framed on the model of the *Essay on Man*—when he began his great work. It is to be feared that there are comparatively few who think it a great work now; but not only were his owñ youthful companions penetrated by admiration for it, as was

natural, but all Edinburgh, always sensitive to a new national distinction, received it and its young author with enthusiasm. He came thither, after trial of various situations as tutor, though only nineteen, in 1797, and by good fortune got into the hands of people who could befriend him at least in the way of good company and social advancement. He had his manuscript in his pocket, and was a handsome lad, propitiating strangers by his good looks; and his story was one to interest a literary community. He had brought the best character and auguries of future fame from his University, and he had all the confidence in his poem which it became a young poet to have, and felt, could he ever get it printed, that the world would be at his feet. The friends to whom it had been confided in manuscript were of the same opinion, and though he had to wait and suffer various disappointments in the meantime, yet the *Pleasures of Hope* was published when he was only twenty-one, and was received with instant favour.

Scott was as yet but a humble and voiceless young advocate, and had not ventured upon so much as *Lenore* when this new poet appeared. Henry Brougham was a youth of twenty whom young Campbell hoped to see "an ornament of his country;" and the *Edinburgh Review* and all the commotion it raised were still among the secrets of the future. It was, therefore, rather the unawakened Edinburgh upon which Burns had burst like a meteor, confusing and disturbing all laws and prejudices,—the Edinburgh over which the Man of Feeling still reigned, and

where Dugald Stewart, bland and philosophical, and Alison, the well-bred Episcopalian divine, with his elegant canons of taste, gave a tone of dignified calm to society, — than that Edinburgh which we have been discussing, the brilliant town from which all the skirmishers of literature were frisking forth, and whose sober quiet had given way to a rule of fiery frolic, dash, and daring, unrivalled in the world of literature—to which we are now for a moment brought back. There was no poet then in those quiet days, nor any critics to speak of; a mild and feeble *Edinburgh Magazine* was the sole representative of periodical literature, and no public defiance of the old established ways of poetry and authorship had yet been given in the gray metropolis of the North. Campbell's first patron was a Dr. Anderson, spoken of as the author of *Lives of the British Poets,* whose name is not to be found even in the Encyclopædias. He was a friend of Leyden, who has been already referred to, and of Grahame, the gentle singer of the *Sabbath;* but neither of these soft-voiced minor minstrels had as yet made their appearance in print. There are some wonderful stories about the poverty and depression amid which the *Pleasures of Hope* was written, but most of these seem to be somewhat apocryphal. The young poet's rapid changes from melancholy to hope; his declaration at one moment that "there are days when I can't abide to walk in the sunshine, and when I would almost rather be shot than come within the sight of any man or be spoken to by any mortal;" and at another, his cheerful adop-

tion of his friends' hopes that he would become "a great man on the strength of a single poem," and description, "made with great animation," of "the fashion in which he would live, through what countries he would travel, and all the grand things he would do," are nothing wonderful in the history of an imaginative youth, prone to sentiment, easily up and easily down. But he had not, as some of his contemporaries had, to wait long for general recognition. His first poem brought him immediate fame. "Public curiosity having been studiously kept awake for some months, the demand for copies was unprecedented. Anticipation, which had run very high as to its merits, was fully justified by the perusal; and when the youth of the poet was considered, the mature strength and beauty of the poem struck every reader with surprise. He had suddenly emerged, it was said, like a star from his obscurity, and, young as he was, had thrown a new and increasing light over the literary horizon of his country." As an individual instance of this prompt favour, we may quote the following incident, showing how Dr. Gregory, one of the great physicians who have reigned in dynasties in Edinburgh, had his attention directed to the poem:—

"Calling one morning at the publishers, he took up the new poem just sent in from the printers. 'Ah, what have we here?' said he, 'the *Pleasures of Hope*.' He looked carelessly between the uncut leaves, until, observing a passage that struck him forcibly, he turned to the beginning and never moved from the side of the counter till he had finished the first part. He then, in the most emphatic terms, said: 'Mr. Mundell, this is poetry! where is the author to be found? I will call upon him imme-

diately.' From Mr. Mundell's shop Dr. Gregory went to attend a consultation; but finding the hour was long past, and that he had unwittingly given to poetry the time meant for his patient, he called on the author and left a note for him expressing his admiration of the poem, and requesting the pleasure of his acquaintance."

Another story is told of Campbell's introduction to Edinburgh society, of a still more gratifying character. Scott is said to have invited him to dinner with the view of making him acquainted with his own circle of wits and men of letters. The young poet was somewhat surprised, perhaps a little piqued, to be introduced to none of those celebrities, most of them older, richer, and more confident than himself; for he divined by the talk going on at the table that he was surrounded by men of distinction. He was, however, soon indemnified for this apparent neglect, and the incident furnishes us with a pleasant scene. It is easy to imagine the curiosity, and interest, and mortification, and suspicious pride of the easily-offended youth, with all the warm susceptibility to affront and slight which belonged at once to his youth, his species, and his nation, sitting eager-eyed, not knowing whether to be angry or pleased, amid this brilliant circle, where he was the only stranger.

"Where Scott presided (says the formal narrative) the conversation was sure to be edifying as well as pleasant. At length, when the cloth was removed and the loyal toasts were disposed of, Scott stood up, and with a handsome and complimentary notice of the new poem, proposed a bumper to the author of the *Pleasures of Hope*. 'The poem,' he added, 'is in the hands of all our friends, and the poet,' pointing to a young gentleman on his right, 'I have now the honour of introducing to you.' The

toast was received with enthusiasm. The eyes of the company were fixed on the young poet, and although taken by surprise he acknowledged the compliment with so much taste and good feeling, that, after hearing him speak, no one felt surprised that so young a man had written the *Pleasures of Hope.*"

This touch was like the ever generous and friendly soul of the magician, far greater than Campbell, who had not as yet found his divining wand, nor was aware of his own power. The youth thus introduced made his way into all the Edinburgh drawing-rooms with a halo of youthful glory about his head. He was received like a son in the house of Alison, with whom he kept up a warm friendship all his life; and was made free of society in the always intellectual and ambitious town. Next to Burns—though at how great a distance—he was the first inheritor of the northern laurels.

Mrs. Fletcher, one of the social authorities of the time, describes Campbell as "an ardent enthusiastic boy, younger, even in appearance than in years." Sometimes the young poet, thus suddenly introduced into society, sinned against good-breeding, and this kind patroness of literature had once occasion to "give him a tremendous lecture" on the youthful impertinence with which he had "quizzed" the somewhat ridiculous old Earl of Buchan, then a well-known figure in Scotch society; but he seems to have taken his scolding like a man after the first pangs of injured pride. In other encounters his temper was not so perfect. Scott tells an amusing story of mutual offence, yet appreciation, which is exceedingly cha-

racteristic. Leyden had been the means of introducing Campbell to the genial house of Scott, who belonged to a higher social level than either of these young men. But the two quarrelled on some personal matter, and, probably by way of bringing them together, Scott repeated to Leyden the fine ballad of *Hohenlinden*, which, like most of the poems of the time, was handed about in manuscript, and read and criticised by innumerable enthusiasts before it came the length of print. "Dash it, man," said Leyden, "tell the fellow I hate him. But, dash him, he has written the finest verses that have been published these fifty years." When this utterance was repeated to Campbell, that more dignified youth responded with offended solemnity, "Tell Leyden that I detest him; but I know the value of his critical approbation." How Scott must have laughed in his sleeve at the two affronted heroes! "I did mine errand as faithfully as one of Homer's messengers," he says.

The great poem, which excited so much admiration, and held a famous doctor breathless at the side of a counter, in oblivion of patients and engagements, exerts no such influence over any reader now. A line here and there has passed into the general recollection of the world, to be possessed and used by many who are totally unaware whence it came, and this is one test of fame; but it is to be feared that few now regard the *Pleasures of Hope* with breathless interest or understand the admiration it called forth. It is curious, however, to note—at once the straightforwardness, surpassing that of any of his contemporaries, who were all

moved as much as Campbell by the new reign of liberty and the hopes of universal renovation awakened in France—with which he plunges into the praise of Freedom and enumerates her heroes: and the skill with which he directs his reader to a corner of the struggle which alarmed nobody. To be told that

> "Hope for a moment bade the world farewell,
> And Freedom shrieked when Kosciusko fell,"

touched no political prejudices, and did not frighten the most timid Tory. The principles were liberal and noble: yet nearer home, perhaps, they might have been thought revolutionary. It probably was a mere poetical instinct in favour of a remoter and more picturesque struggle which made Campbell take all danger out of his worship of liberty by giving that dangerous goddess her local habitation in the favourite land of revolution, where everybody allows it to be legitimate. But it was a judicious choice, and recommended the young poet to the Liberal party without doing him any harm with the Conservatives. "Mr. Fletcher was won by his passion for liberty;" while Scott and the Tories found no fault with the revolutionary hero, who belonged to the romantic history of a previous struggle.

Thus Campbell derived, if not much profit, at least a great deal of pleasure and glory from his first work. Long afterwards he gave the following description of himself to one of the Kembles:—"The day that I first met your honoured father was at Henry Siddons', on the Calton Hill, in Edinburgh. The scenery of the Firth of Forth was in full view from the house; the time was

summer, and the weather peculiarly balmy and beautiful. I was a young, shrinking, bashful creature; my poems were out a few days; and it was neck or nothing with me whether I should go down to the gulf of utter neglect or not, although with all my bashfulness I had then a much better opinion of myself and my powers than I have at this moment. Your dear father praised my work and quoted the line,

'"Tis distance lends enchantment to the view,'

looking at those very hills that suggested the thought. Well, I thought to myself (for, as I have said, I was at that time enormously vain), there is some taste in this world, and I shall get on in it." This is very artless and simple, though the narrator was no longer the youth who believed the good taste of the world to be gauged by his power of "getting on" in it. We fear that the associations of the present generation with the lines in question are not reverential, and that, like so much pretty sentiment of the commonplace kind, this disrespectful age quotes them with rather a comic than a poetical sense of their truth. But when we think of the young dreamer looking out from that Athenian mount upon the hills, seeing across the gleaming Firth the round Lomonds in the nearer distance, the shadowy ranges beyond, we may believe that it was a real if not a very great inspiration that pointed out to him the ethereal blue, woven of air and space, which threw a tender glory over the homely grassy slopes which were neither great nor lofty in themselves. If universal quotation is the test of excel-

lence, no detached line in poetry was ever more popular than this; and yet the reader will smile. The simile will recall to him not the blue mountains rising far in shadowy infinitude, slope beyond slope, against the sky, but only certain little moral or social deceptions in respect to which he has quoted these words a hundred times. Thus what was poetry in the fresher experience of the world of that day, all touched with the sympathy of a poetic revival, has fallen into completest commonplace with us who live in an older and less susceptible age.

The profit of the work was not inconsiderable considering its character, and that the rate of extraordinary remuneration inaugurated by Scott had not as yet been revealed. "The copyright," he himself says, "of my *Pleasures of Hope*, worth an annuity of two hundred pounds for life, was sold out and out for sixty pounds." His calculation is founded, his biographer tells, on an offer made to Campbell by a London publisher three years after. Certainly, no publisher anywhere would offer an annuity of two hundred pounds for such a poem now—or probably anything at all until the public had very clearly expressed its opinion. The sum was not very large, but Messrs. Mundell of Edinburgh, though they flourished before the era of the great Constables and Blackwoods, must have been liberal in their generation, since they gave the poet, notwithstanding their purchase of the copyright, fifty pounds for each new edition. This, to a man so young, and so little accustomed to money, was no insignificant sum. He

began, as was natural, to plan new works, and gave himself up to the intoxicating ideal of a life of poetry and praise, in which the most delightful of occupations should secure him all the rewards necessary for life, substantial means, as well as the sweetest applause. He was to write a poem upon "Helvetian Freedom," with Tell for a hero: he was to gratify his own patriotic feelings and stimulate those of his countrymen by *The Queen of the North*, a poem of which Edinburgh was to be the scene, and "the glory and independence of Scotland" the subject. And it was while musing of those great themes that a faculty in him more real than that which went to the weaving of the *Pleasures of Hope*, was suddenly wakened by the singing, at one of the houses to which he was invited in Edinburgh, of the fine air of the well-known song, *Ye Gentlemen of England*. Perhaps, all fresh in his fervour of poetic composition, Campbell despised the old-fashioned words which have returned into favour now. At all events, his ear was caught by the air, and he began to sing to himself the bolder strain of his *Mariners of England*, as true and fine a national song as ever was written. How it was that this fine ardour and lyrical passion should burst from the bosom of the self-contained, shy, susceptible, and timorous young poet, who appears to us in his biography always a little on the defensive, with no real trust in the great people among whom he had strayed, and who, though with much tenderness of affection towards his special friends, had very little to say to them—it is impossible to explain. Naturally,

he was as little aware, as are most other mortal performers, which string of his instrument it was that rang the truest.

He had, however, discretion enough to see that to continue for ever the object of the delightful plaudits of the Edinburgh circles, and the "tremendous lectures" of its kind ladies, was impossible: and some side influence, probably Scott's *Lenore* and *Goetz von Berlichingen*, and the rising knowledge of German literature, which was moving society about him, induced Campbell to decide upon going to Germany. He does not seem, however, to have had any very distinct aim in so doing, or even to have known where to go or what to do when he got there. He went without the advantage of possessing any language but his own, and though he anticipates before starting that "I shall see Schiller and Goethe, the banks of the Rhine, and the mistress of Werter" (though where he was to find the latter we do not know), he does not seem to have fulfilled any of those hopes. He saw Klopstock, in Hamburg; he wandered to Ratisbon, choosing that place for no apparent reason, was there when the French took the city, and afterwards made various devious pilgrimages, which were, however, not without profit. He saw—if not Goethe — Hohenlinden, and those pale currents of the Iser, ashen hued by nature, which were so fatally reddened. He saw more than one terrible field of battle in all the stillness of the accomplished carnage, lighted by "the wolf-scaring faggot that guarded the slain." He was driven home at last

in the spring of the year 1801, having been eight or nine months absent, by the declaration of war against Denmark, his residence at Altona being no longer tenable under the circumstances. At Altona he had met a number of exiled Irishmen, who suggested his *Exile of Erin*. Thus, his best-known lyrics sprang into being, all keen with personal impression. *The Battle of the Baltic* and *The Soldier's Dream*, perhaps the most refined and exquisite of all, came from the same experiences. He met no poets, got admission to no intellectual society — in which indeed, it is probable that his somewhat self-absorbed mind, dwelling in the circle of its own tenacious likings, shy and obstinate, and unskilled in speech — though he seems to have stumbled along *tant bien que mal* by the aid of Latin — would have received but little advantage. But he received much from the picture never to be forgotten of the field of battle—

"Our bugles sang truce—for the night-cloud had lowered,
And the sentinel stars set their watch in the sky;
And thousands had sunk on the ground overpowered,
The weary to sleep, and the wounded to die."

The English language has nothing finer or more inspiriting in their kind than the patriotic ballads which were perfected at this period. The song which he had begun to adapt in the Edinburgh drawing-room to the old tune he liked, was finished at Altona—

"Britannia needs no bulwark,
No towers along the steep,"

was the poet's answer to the suggestion of the proposed fortifications with which England has so often

been adjured to defend herself against invaders. His protest was little reasonable, no doubt, but it was a popular sentiment. And it is one of the mysteries of genius which is least comprehensible, how a youth of the most peaceable sort, trained upon letters, and sea-sick and wretched when fate compelled him to cross the Channel, should have been the person to add to our national literature those boldest and most gallant of sailor-lyrics. Curiously enough, he seems, according to Scott at least, to have been doubtful about these finest efforts of his genius. "And there's that glorious little poem of *Hohenlinden*," Scott said to Washington Irving—"after he had written it he did not seem to think much of it—'d—d drum and trumpet lines.' I got him to write it to me, and I believe that the delight I felt and expressed had an effect in inducing him to print it. The fact is, Campbell is in a manner a bugbear to himself. The brightness of his early success is a detriment to all his further efforts. He is afraid of the shadow that his own form casts before him." How strange is the reversal made by time of those decisions of the moment which have so much effect upon the lives of the candidates for literary fame! "The brightness" of Campbell's "early success" has now all faded away, and very few are the readers who open the *Pleasures of Hope*, or linger over the measured monotony of *Gertrude of Wyoming*. But *Hohenlinden*, *The Battle of the Baltic*, *The Soldier's Dream*, and *The Mariners of England*, will live as long as the language, and are the only real foundation of Campbell's fame.

His life after this early and brilliant beginning was much like that of all his class, the unfortunates who, beguiled by "early success," throw themselves upon literature as a profession, without any other more permanent and satisfactory stay. In saying this we do not mean to echo the ignorant, though not altogether unfounded, prejudice which once existed against literary solvency and capacity to "pay its way." Scott made the profession one of splendid profit as well as reputation, and some fortunes have been made and many comfortable incomes, since Scott, by the pen. But at the same time there can be little doubt that it is a precarious and anxious profession, an excellent addition to his means who has already something more steady and regular to lean upon, but a poor foundation upon which to build the responsibilities of life. Campbell's story is one from which the young poet may learn a serious lesson. He was not one of those shiftless sons of letters, who are constantly falling upon the aid of their friends, but a proud man with much independence of spirit. Nor was he altogether without other means. At least one fortunate legacy came to his aid when he was struggling with the burdens of mid-life, and other windfalls fell in his way; but even with these the dependence of a family upon the capacity of its head to produce a constant supply of so much written matter, worthy or unworthy, is a very serious matter. In Campbell's case, as in many others, the very anxiety to do well, and to have his tale of bricks ready at the appointed time, often so

preoccupied his brain that he was rendered incapable of the task he contemplated with so much anxiety. And when sunshine came and he ventured upon a little extra expense, apparently justified by his increasing means, there had to be almost invariably a painful retracing of his steps, when it turned out that to-morrow was not as to-day, and the powers that served him so well one season failed him the next. Poetry of course, as everybody knows, will not always come when it is called, but even "Annuals," and "Selections," and magazine articles, require an effort of which the brain of the literary hack is not always capable. Not a navvy nor a sailor, or take a finer simile, a successful surgeon, requires a stronger head, a more steady hand, nerves of iron and health unbroken, than an author who lives by his work, and has no other means of procuring his daily bread. Campbell became the editor of the *New Monthly Magazine*, and did not flourish in that capacity. He was over-anxious, over-scrupulous as to the value of the contributions sent to him—then after hesitating over his papers for days would make a leap at the worst of them, to the confusion of his previous deliberations. And he fell into the beaten track, produced biographies and histories, for which he had neither the turn nor the training. What he could do was not the kind of thing that can be done to order. The noble and spirit-stirring national lyrics of which he is the author were far beyond the powers of poets much greater than he. He has no other ground of pretension to stand by the side of Wordsworth, or

Coleridge, or even Scott; but in this special branch of poetry he has done what not all of them put together could do.

Campbell's career was deeply weighted in other ways. His only son, whose childhood had been beautiful beyond expression to the tender father, who felt, as young parents often do, his own child a revelation from heaven, was a life-long grief and disappointment to him, and spent most of his life in a lunatic asylum. His wife died early; and he was left to make up to himself, as far as he could, by a hundred gentle flirtations, chiefly with ladies under the age of ten, for the absence of a woman's society and the bright faces of children. Some of his innocent adventures in this way are at once amusing and pathetic. On one occasion he advertised as follows for the name of a lovely child whom he had encountered in the streets:—

"A gentleman, sixty-three years old, who, on Saturday last . . . met with a most interesting-looking child, four years of age; but who forbore, from respect for the lady who had her in hand, to ask the girl's name and abode, will be gratefully obliged to those who have the happiness of possessing the child, to be informed where she lives, and if he may be allowed to see her again."

This little fairy princess never was found, though many parents wrote to the advertiser, making sure that their own special darling must have been the object of so romantic an appeal, one mother among the number, to Campbell's great indignation, suggesting that it was her little *boy* for whom he had conceived such an enthusiasm. The gray-haired poet, daunted in his natural shyness by a forbidding

countenance, and seeking this little phantom of delight about the London streets, and through the leafless parks in the sunshiny April mornings, makes a touching, if gently-comic picture; for though he had many friends, he had no smiles at home.

> "I stopped the enchantress, and was told,
> Tho' tall, she was but four years old,
> Her guide so grave an aspect wore,
> I would not ask a question more."

Such a curious innocent version of a "love that never had an earthly close," draws our hearts to the forlorn and solitary man.

Amid all his ups and downs of living, Campbell had the pleasure of continual acknowledgment and appreciation from the public. When he took to delivering lectures upon poetry his audiences were crowded and enthusiastic wherever he went, both in London and the provinces. "The lecture-room was crowded by the *élite;* all were eager to listen;" "his prose was declared to be more poetic than his poetry," the newspapers reported. In 1826 his University (Glasgow) paid him the highest compliment in its power by electing him Lord Rector, a post which, contrary to custom, he held for three years. He was received in Glasgow, his native town, with unbounded enthusiasm, filling his old friends with joy and pride, and recalling many an early prognostication. Ten years after he visited Edinburgh, to find most of the patrons of his youth still alive, and to be received everywhere with acclamations. "Cheered on coming aboard the steamboats—into

public rooms—on leaving them," he says with an astonished pleasure, describing his journey. And here he had the freedom of the town bestowed upon him, and a public dinner, and every kind of flattering observance. "I have been made a freeman of Edinburgh and *fêted* like a prince," he says. "I shall make you laugh at the effusions of my vanity when I describe to you the windows of Queen Street filled with ladies looking at your little Solomon in all his glory! . . . Well, laugh as you well may at my being vain of being seen by ladies, I think you know me well enough to believe that the excitement of last Friday was intense — beyond pleasure and amounting to pain. . . . When I came to speak of Dugald Stewart, Alison, and other of my old Edinburgh friends, the act of suppressing tears (for I did suppress them) amounted to agony." He found, however, all these old friends enjoying their old age in the calm and gentle satisfaction which becomes the end of life. The "dear old Priest," the "Man of Taste," Alison, whom the grateful poet had called the father of his mind, and whose name he had given to his second child, who died in infancy, was still living "in very fair health for a man of eighty," and "with his faculties as fresh as ever;" while Dugald Stewart, he who had patronised the youth of Burns, as well as that of Campbell, still lived in peaceful retirement surrounded with love and honour.

This return to the scenes of his youth, notwithstanding the glories heaped upon him, was full of sadness to the man with whom life had dealt but hardly.

Mrs. Grant relates how, in the midst of his public triumphs, "a dejected-looking gentleman" called upon her to renew old acquaintance. "I should know you," she said, "but cannot be sure." "Campbell the poet," said he, "with a kind of affecting simplicity."

This is the last sight we have of the old generation, the men of the past, who had wondered at Burns when he appeared, and lived to see so many wonders more. It lingered so long that Henry Mackenzie, the Man of Feeling, he of the *Mirror* and *Lounger*, lived to see Edinburgh blossom out of its provincialism into the dash and commotion of a literary metropolis. This age of greatness lasted through many brilliant years. Even after Scott's withdrawal to Abbotsford, he was still to be seen about the familiar streets and in the Parliament House —on the whole the greatest of living writers; and there was Jeffrey, the acknowledged chief of criticism, though the excitement of the *Edinburgh Review* had by this time calmed down. And other figures had risen to diversify the scene. Miss Ferrier, the author of *Marriage* and *The Inheritance*, books which secured Scott's warm admiration and have continued their hold upon the succeeding generations—a Scotch Miss Austen, with a broader perception of the ludicrous and a less delicate touch, but much of the same minute and graphic power; Mrs. Grant of Laggan, a woman to whose recollections we are indebted for many particulars of the cheerful breadth of Edinburgh society at this its most brilliant period, and whose *Letters from the Mountains* helped to make the

Highlands known in their homelier modern aspect; and many more secondary singers and gentle essayists. The Blackwood circle, too, with all its wild wit and daring discussion of everything in heaven and earth, was in fullest force; and life was overflowing in the old lofty streets, outside the noise of which, yet not entirely withdrawn from its echoes, the patriarchs of the former generation were "wearing away."

We may add, before we leave these northern scenes, to which for a time the high flood of intellectual activity seemed to have been transferred, the gentle name of James Grahame, the author of the "Sabbath." He was not a great poet, nor is that a great poem, but it is very national, and full of a tender sweetness —an echo of Cowper on Scottish soil. Grahame came to light among the early band of the Edinburgh Reviewers, a spectator and sympathiser, if no more—adding a mild enthusiasm for the work of his stronger and more daring friends to his own gentle faculty. He was one of the unemployed young advocates who trod the pavement in the Parliament House along with Jeffrey and Horner, but tiring of that exercise, and possessing little power to struggle with the world, he retired into the congenial quiet of a clergyman's life, taking orders in the Church of England. His poems are full of the atmosphere of a pure and retired existence, with something, however, that reminds the reader more of a Scotch manse than an English parsonage; and he was always intensely national. "Must I leave," he says,

"Dear land, thy bonny braes, thy dales,
Each haunted by its myriad streams, o'erhung
With all the varied charms of bush and tree,
And mould my heart anew to take the stamp
Of foreign friendships in a foreign land,
And learn to love the music of strange tongues!
Yes, I may love the music of strange tongues,
And mould my heart anew to take the stamp
Of foreign friendships in a foreign land;
But to my parchëd mouth's roof cleave my tongue,
My fancy fade into the yellow leaf,
And this oft-pausing heart forget to throb,
If, Scotland, thee and thine, I e'er forget."

It is a curious example of the changes that increased communication and constant intercourse have made, to realise that Grahame's foreign land was no farther off than the English side of the Tweed. He was one of the friends whom Thomas Campbell made in the period of his early glory in Edinburgh, and the following little sketch gives some idea of the gentle and pious poet:—

"So small a part of James's value lay in his poetry, that I feel it difficult to express my sentiments about it. . . . One of the most endearing circumstances which I remember of Grahame was his singing. I shall never forget one summer evening that we agreed to sit up all night, and go together to Arthur's Seat to see the sun rise. We sat accordingly all night in his delightful parlour—the seat of so many happy remembrances. We then went out, and saw a beautiful sunrise. I returned home with him, for I was living in his house at the time. He was unreserved in all his devoutest feelings before me; and from the beauty of the morning scenery, and the recent death of his sister, our conversation took a serious turn. As I retired to my own bed, I overheard his devotions—not his prayer, but a hymn which he sang, and with a power and inspiration beyond himself and beyond anything else. At that time he was a strong-voiced

and commanding-looking man. The remembrance of his large expressive features when he climbed the hill, and of his organ-like voice in praising God, is yet fresh and ever pleasing in my mind."

This gentle pair, full of religion and devotion, their heads running over with verse and poetic musings, as they climbed in that dreamy dimness which was neither night nor dawn, the rugged ways where solitude lies sacred and still as if in the heart of the mountains, might have seen from the heights the luminous window where the plotters of the *Edinburgh Review* were arranging their onslaught upon the world, a scene as different as it is possible to conceive. And it was not long after that the *Noctes Ambrosianæ*, in full swing of free poetry and criticism, began to awaken all the echoes. Wilson's tavern parlour, whether real or imaginary, has as genuine an existence as Edinburgh itself; and though all that eloquence and mirth, and pathos, and delightful madness of inspired talk has fallen a little out of hearing nowadays, it was in its time as authentic a scene as any club in the three kingdoms, and far more entertaining and brilliant than any of them. To these voices old Edinburgh laughed and listened with an uproar of mirth and applause, while Scott poured forth the great romances which kept all Europe breathless, and little Jeffrey sat in precise yet lively state, cutting and carving the reputations of all the poets, and dealing his strokes about like lightning. Another great and characteristic figure, the prophet and Seer whom we have so recently lost, Thomas Carlyle, though but for a moment

associated with this scene, had begun to be known, though but vaguely, through the early mists. In all the corners there was twittering of smaller singers, simple yet tuneful—such as linger with the larks about the dewy fields, and take pleasure in their song without getting more credit for it than their little prototype; and in the pulpit there had risen a blear-eyed and rugged orator, with heavy features and a broad Fife accent, Thomas Chalmers, who was the greatest preacher of his day. At no time has Edinburgh come to such a climax of genius and fame.

THOMAS CAMPBELL, born 1771; died 1844.

Published | The Pleasures of Hope, 1799.
| Gertrude of Wyoming, 1809.
Lyrics in *Morning Chronicle*, 1800-1802.
| Specimens of British Poets, 1818.
| Theodric, etc., 1824.
Pilgrim of Glencoe, 1842.
Annals of Great Britain.
Life of Mrs. Siddons.
Life of Petrarch.

Edited the New Monthly Magazine in which the late Lyrics were published, from 1820 to 1830.

JAMES GRAHAME, born 1765; died 1811.

Published The Sabbath, 1804.
Sabbath Walks, 1805.
Biblical Pictures, } 1806.
Birds of Scotland, }
British Energies, 1809.

CHAPTER V.

LONDON: THE LOWER CIRCLE—"THE COCKNEY SCHOOL."

A LITTLE before the beginning of the outburst of literary life in Edinburgh, which has been the subject of our recent chapters, a curious and characteristic circle, or series of circles, existed in London, quite distinct from the higher level of life and letters on which Canning and his polite associates flourished. This lower region possessed many peculiarities of the old Grub Street existence. It was poor; its life was full of literary schemes and compilations of all kinds, "Specimens," "Selections," "Epitomes of History," "Annual Registers," and many more—which along with such poor scraps as were then required in the shape of magazine articles, answered the purpose of securing daily bread to a large body of writers to whom literature had become a trade; while ever and anon a poem, more or less ambitious, a drama, a philosophical essay, would burst forth from the obscurity to show how among these poor literary hacks, labouring hard in their vocation, there was some genius and much ambition, and that desire to do something worth remembering, or being remembered by, which gives a generous inspiration often to

the merest scribbler. The most remarkable and individual figure among them was that of William Godwin, whose works, both of philosophy and imagination, if such a sombre and subtle study of motive and impulse as *Caleb Williams* can be called by the latter name, have taken a permanent place in literature. So much can scarcely be said for Holcroft, whose novels have dropped out of recollection altogether, though one or two of his dramas, notably the *Road to Ruin*, still hold the stage; or Hazlitt, most of whose essays and criticisms, though often brilliant, have fallen into that limbo which, alas! is the natural place even of the ablest commentaries upon other men's works and lives. One of the most curious particulars in the life of these London coteries of the poorer kind is the quiet commonplace *bourgeois* existence which they carried on obscurely in out-of-the-way streets in all the usual subjection to law and social order, notwithstanding that the principles they maintained were wild enough, as they thought themselves, and as many people thought, to upset all the foundations of society and blow the British Empire out of its secure place in the protecting seas. Some of them were tried for high treason, no less, in those hot and exciting French Revolution days. They were considered dangerous to their country and to religion, and to everything that the ordinary mass holds sacred; yet, nevertheless, lived very quiet, humdrum, citizen lives, guilty of little more than an occasional indulgence in what is euphemistically called "wine," and fighting very hardly for existence in the lower levels of literary

work. They possess a certain importance in literary history, chiefly as examples of that boundless underground of persevering labour which exists in every generation unseen, struggling with, yet clinging to, "the booksellers," concocting with them a hundred schemes which are as much "trade" on the one side as the other, furnishing series of histories, of biographies, of editions of the poets, in continued repetition, yet fondly retaining still that hope of the dreaming fancy—

> "To frame it knows not what excelling thing,
> And win it knows not what sublime reward
> Of praise and honour."

Godwin, who was the most remarkable member of this group, was at the same time the most striking example of its union of extravagant opinions and humdrum life. Twice during his career his house and name came before the world with an original and even dazzling identity, in strange discordance with the calm and tradesmanlike tenor of his ordinary habits. One of these periods was that in which the philosopher, with his bold and wild opinions and prim pedantic yet romantic temper, found his mate in the beautiful and brave woman whose pensive countenance and untimely fate silence criticism, who was, like himself, a philosopher and sceptic, and whose name for long was the emblem of unwomanly revolutionism, regarded by the public with that horror which unbelief in a woman always inspires. Mary Wollstonecraft was Godwin's wife for not more than a year, but this brief romance gives him an interest

which does not really belong to him as a human creature in his own right. Some seventeen years later the brilliant apparition of the young Shelley, sweetest, most visionary, and most lawless of poets, crossed this humdrum life, and once more it blazes out for a moment upon the world. In neither instance is the light without painful and bitter shadows, but it interrupts with curious intensity as obstinate, serious, self-willed, and dull a career as ever London citizen lived among the dingy little streets, monotonous in a half twilight of ordinariness and routine. *Caleb Williams* and the *Political Justice* burst out of this gray existence as Mary Wollstonecraft and young Shelley broke into it; but the time illustrated by these luminous points is as a half-hour in a long day of dull and regular occupation, domesticity, shopkeeping, homely meals, and humdrum surroundings.

There was no wealth and little grace of aspect in this underground society, in the small houses and back parlours which were in themselves so unbeautiful; and it is difficult, without some aid of money, to give interest to domestic surrounding, at least in a great monotonous town, where the idyllic is out of place, and such a happy thrifty home as that of Southey's among the mountains is impossible. The Holcrofts and Hazlitts had not the gift of Boswell to make the bustling old streets and dingy coffee-houses picturesque and animated, and the atmosphere is dull which breathes about them, although the Lambs would sometimes come arm-in-arm to call, or Coleridge make his

appearance looming largely against the sky, or Wordsworth pay a passing visit, bringing with him the breath of the hills.

Otherwise we find little beauty, either of temper or manners, in this little world of literature. It is hopelessly plebeian and narrow, self-asserting and self-repeating. Except in the case of "Lamb, the frolic and the gentle," neither the conversations nor the letters are of a brilliant character that reach us out of that active, fluent, much-discussing, and reasoning community, where every individual possessed some notable features, and all were supposed to be, and believed themselves, guides of opinion and teachers of men. Upon the Lambs in their quaint city chambers, the walls lined with dark "Hogarths" and old books; the tables surrounded once a week with earnest whist-players; the supper spread on one side, cold beef and roast potatoes, and the kindest welcome—the spectator lingers lovingly. No such pair as that brother and sister are in all the bands of their contemporaries: the tender love that braved every suffering undaunted—the forlorn delightful wit that made shift to smile amid its tears—the union, passing that even of marriage, of common misfortune, of heroic self-devotion, of fraternity above all parallel—the patience and the misery, and the peace and happiness, what words can do justice to them? To see them in their low-roofed, dark little rooms up those stairs in the Temple, looking out upon the court, where, for pleasure and diversion, "there is a pump always going," and "the trees come in at the window, so that it is

like living in a garden:" or sitting together "in the front row of the pit at Drury Lane:" or taking their "evening walk, past the theatres, to look at the outside of them at least," through the streets, all dim with smoky oil lamps, and twinkling shop-windows, and the news of battles and victories cried about the pavements: or perhaps with a heartrending sympathy, to watch them turning sadly in their periodical pilgrimage towards the asylum, in which one of them had to spend half her life—"slowly pacing together a little footpath in Hoxton fields, both weeping bitterly"—is perhaps, of all the sights then procurable in England, the one most entirely touching. But it is not Charles and Mary Lamb that are our subjects, though they were by far the most attractive group in the literary community, quick, and keen, and vivacious, and headstrong, hot in politics and obstinate in philosophy, which flourished in the narrow city streets, dining upon hot shoulders of mutton, and supping on pieces of cold beef, and contenting itself in its little sphere of limited enjoyment and middle-class atmosphere, as unlike as possible to the more elegant and bigger world of letters, which scarcely touched it in its totally different orbit above.

William Godwin was the son of a dissenting minister in the country, a man of narrow but fervent religious zeal, "with so great a disapprobation for the Church of England as rather to approve of his children absenting themselves from all public worship than joining in her offices,"—one of a class which has supplied more largely, perhaps, than any other, the

rank and file of literary workers. The position of a dissenting minister is, and still more was, one of considerable picturesqueness and a sort of paradoxical interest: for while the ambition of the class invariably, or almost invariably, points towards letters and cultivation, their generally hopeless confinement within a petty circle of uneducated and narrow-minded people gives them a bitter sense of exclusion from what they most desire, an exclusion which, without being really a wrong done to them by society, appears like one, and impresses the individual as a distinct personal injury. "Their youthful hopes and vanity had been mortified in them," says Hazlitt, another branch of the same tree, and an excellent authority on the subject, "even in their boyish days, by the neglect and supercilious regard of the world:" which perhaps may be explained to mean that the world objected, under any circumstances, to accept the training of the dissenting colleges as equal to that of the universities, even though the dissenter might know himself, and might really be, infinitely more intellectual and cultivated than the Oxford pass-man; or to grant to the preacher, whose sphere was confined to the lower and least instructed middle classes, the same position as the clergyman who, however poor, has still the possibility of high clerical rank and importance before him.

This disadvantage, which is, we fear, still in many country circles unalterable, adds a persistent undertone of injured feeling, even now, to the sentiment of the clerical class in dissenting communities. Although their position has been greatly modified by the growth

of so many wealthy and cultivated congregations in large towns, it is still sufficiently affected by the same depressing influence as to retain a certain injured tone, a mixture of self-assertion and resentment, which, if not amiable, are yet sufficiently natural feelings; and this sense of injury gives a strong bias of sentiment to the democratic opinions generally prevalent among them. "Their sympathy was not with the oppressors, but the oppressed," Hazlitt adds, with a natural adoption of a most natural prejudice, as if the class he describes were really oppressed and not merely the victims of circumstance, suffering for their resistance to an accepted order of things which they professed to despise, and, according to their own principles, ought to have despised. We would not linger upon this definition of the dissenting minister and his place in the world if we did not feel the importance of it, in reference to the many writers expressing sentiments of extreme liberalism, both in religion and politics, who have come from this class. The sons of dissenting ministers are, in a manner, born heirs to this sense of wrong: they have a fanciful rank as the most highly instructed in their own sphere, which the general world refuses to ratify. And those who, setting out perhaps from no very elevated social level, enter life through this curious little side-door to letters and public influence, are apt to feel its restrictions all the more bitterly from the high expectations of inexperience, to which society always seems more delightful and inspiring than reality shows it: and can scarcely help looking with scorn upon those no better, or probably

much less capable than themselves, whom the world persistently ranks above them. They are thus put on the side of all who have a grievance, all the world over. And yet the wrong is imaginary, the grievance only one of those sentimental grievances which cut deeper than actual wounds, yet are too wide and general to be anybody's fault. The principle of sectarianism, and the deification of individual opinion to which it leads, no doubt helps on the full development of every intellectual vagary; but we believe that the social disqualifications, which bring with them a profound sense of injury, not to be healed by any practical success, have still more to do with this tendency towards scepticism in religion and revolutionism in politics. Nor do we accuse dissenting ministers of any pettiness or conscious warp of feeling in this instinctive sentiment. No injury is so deep as systematic disparagement, the allowed and instinctive imputation of inferiority; and when, in addition to the fact that there is often no reason for it, there is added the other still more painful fact that there seems no help for it, it is impossible to wonder at the deep-lying resentment it produces—resentment as causeless and as hopeless as itself.

It was from this class of poor and strongly-feeling men, whose position, had they been in the Church of England, would have been that of the most conservative and constitutional of all poorly remunerated and hard-worked public servants, but who, out of it, were the natural champions of every infringed right, and warmest eager upholders of every democratic

claim—men to whom every poor curate, no better off than themselves, embodied the principle of aristocracy and tyranny—that Godwin sprang. He began life a precociously rigid Calvinist, and at seventeen was rejected at Homerton Academy "on suspicion of Sandemanianism," the straitest form of the Calvinistic system. At Hoxton, where he entered on being thus repulsed, under an apparently milder sway, he maintained the doctrine of eternal punishment against his tutor, and came out of college in his twenty-third year "as pure a Sandemanian as I had gone in." But no sooner was he out of college than the conflicting tides of opinion seized him, and "my religious creed insensibly degenerated," he says. He was actually a dissenting minister at Ware, the religious instructor of a congregation, when his mind thus changed. This modification of his views was brought about by contact with another member of the same profession, the Rev. Joseph Fawcett (it is curious how particular both Godwin and Hazlitt are in giving this unknown authority the title of Reverend), who was considered among his contemporaries "a person of literary eminence," author of the *Art of War*, and a popular lecturer, but now altogether fallen out of knowledge—"one of whose favourite topics was a declamation against the domestic affections." By the influence of Fawcett and the gradual development of his own mind, Godwin was brought, though not till after he had served another dissenting congregation for some two years as their pastor—leaving them "in consequence of a dispute with my hearers on a question of

Church discipline"—to abandon his profession and take to literature. By this time he was gradually getting loose from religious faith altogether, plunging into the works of "the French philosophers," and, like most of his generation, turning his eyes with more and more intense interest to the great drama then just beginning on the other side of the Channel, where every tie was philosophically unloosed before the great current of popular passion awoke to appal the theorists. It is curious to think of Godwin, the future preacher of absolute theoretical lawlessness, he who believed rule and punishment to be conducive to vice, and marriage a pernicious institution, quarrelling with his congregation on a question of Church discipline.

When he thus abandoned the career for which he had been trained, his first step was to go to London, and his first idea to adopt literature as his profession, after the example of so many others: it was not, however, the modern version of the trade, but essentially the threadbare and beggarly Grub Street form of it upon which Godwin entered. His *Life of Lord Chatham*, his first literary performance, shows the ambition of an independent writer: but as soon as he settled in London he seems to have fallen into the melancholy routine of a literary hack. "My principal employment was now writing for the *English Review*, published by Murray in Fleet Street, at two guineas the sheet, in which employment it was my utmost hope to gain twenty-four guineas per annum. This was probably the busiest period of my life; in the latter end of 1783 I wrote, in ten days, a novel called

Damon and Delia, for which Hookham gave me five guineas, and a novel in three weeks called *Italian Letters*, purchased by Robinson for twenty guineas; and in the first four months of 1784 a novel called *Imogen*, a Pastoral Romance, for which Vane gave me ten pounds." This was followed by "a small volume of my Sermons," dedicated to the Bishop of Llandaff, and various translations and book-work of different kinds. The literary hack of the present day may take comfort in seeing this list of the early and unremembered labours of a man whose reputation has already lasted a century, and whose position in literature is so well defined. Notwithstanding all that is said about the increase of popular literature and the unbounded fertility of the present generation in novel-writing, we believe there are now no literature shops where wares manufactured at this rate would sell in the same way. Even that branch of the craft which supplies the *Family Herald* and *London Journal* has encouragement to take more time at least upon its productions.

Godwin lived in this way for about ten years, during which his creed underwent various modifications from Socinianism to Deism, and passed through many vague shades of sentiment in respect to the possible existence of God. He became, he says, "a complete unbeliever" in 1787; but even that seems doubtful, since there are self-discussions on the subject at a later period, and he did not hesitate to say, in a letter to his mother, that he had "faithfully endeavoured to improve the faculties and opportunities God

has given me"—though the words might be used in deference to the prejudices of the very notable, pious, thrifty, and sensible old lady, whose letters to her son (though without any commas) are about the most natural and wholesome things in Godwin's biography. He lived in homely lodgings in the Strand during this period, and occasionally saw very good company; but all his intimate relations were with men of similar training and convictions to his own. He had a brother or two in town—not very creditable to their family, as appears from the mother's frequent comments and lamentations—and a sister who was established as a dressmaker; and all his surroundings were of a humble class.

When Godwin began his life in London there was also existing there among the shadows a sort of jovial Satyr, not of any class that was recognised by respectability, half parson, half doctor, an altogether lawless personage, whose career from beginning to end had little in it but rude adventure and reckless living, but whose name cannot be omitted in any record of the literature of his period. John Wolcot, or Peter Pindar, as he called himself, had gone through a whole Odyssey before his appearance in the London streets as a man of letters and satirical poet. He had been brought up in the medical profession in his youth, but, going to Jamaica, had found apparently that it would suit his purposes better to be a clergyman, and, according to the easy methods of the time, came home and got himself ordained by the then Bishop of London, for the advantage of his West

Indian patients. When he came back finally to England he threw off the clerical character and resumed the medical; and while trying to establish himself in Cornwall in the latter profession, picked up as his surgery-boy a little Cornishman, a miner's son, John Opie, who turned out to have what was considered at that time a genius for art. It was the growing success of this young painter, whom he had honestly helped on and furthered with all his power, that brought Wolcot to London; and it was here apparently that the strange and abundant faculty of satiric verse which distinguished him found its way into public notice. He had subjects in plenty ready to his hand, and first among them the quaint irrepressible figure of the old king George III., which shines in his verse with a graphic individuality such as graver history rarely secures for its heroes. It would be hard to call these mock odes and ballads ill-natured. They were calculated to make the monarch's august form ridiculous, and sharply point the ludicrous inappropriateness of such a mind as the possessor of royal power; but at this distance the fun and sport and spontaneous overflowing laughter of the satirist, and the perfect and laughable distinctness of the figure he sets before us, are far more conspicuous than any political mischief that could have been in them. The story of the Dumpling, over which the inquisitive king puzzled his brains to know how the apples got into it, and the visit of his Majesty to Whitbread's brewery, are still as amusing as when they were written; and few of the personages in grave historical

biography stand out with half the force which characterises this careless lighthearted picture, in which the fun is so much more prominent than the satire.

"Now did his majesty so gracious say
To Mr. Whitbread in his flying way,
'Whitbread, d'ye nick th' excisemen now and then?
Hæ, Whitbread, when d'ye think to leave off trade?
Hæ? what? Miss Whitbread's still a maid, a maid?
What, what's the matter with the men?

"'D'ye hunt?—hæ, hunt? No, no, you are too *old*—
You'll be lord may'r—lord may'r one day—
Yes, yes, I've heard so—yes, yes, so I'm told:
Don't, don't the fine for sheriff pay—
I'll prick you ev'ry year, man, I declare:
Yes, Whitbread—yes, yes—you shall be lord may'r.

"'Whitbread, d'ye keep a coach, or job one, pray?
Job, job, that's cheapest—yes, that's best, that's best—
You put your liv'ries on your draymen—hæ?
Hæ, Whitbread?—You have feather'd well your nest.
What, what's the price now, hæ, of all your stock?
But, Whitbread, what's o'clock, pray, what's o'clock?'

"Now Whitbread inward said, 'May I be curst
If I know what to answer first;'
Then search'd his brains with ruminating eye—
But e'er the man of malt an answer found,
Quick on his heel, lo, majesty turn'd round,
Skipp'd off, and baulk'd the pleasure of reply."

As an example of personal portraiture, distinct as photography and far more life-like, there could not be anything better than this. The malice has all evaporated out of it, but the amusing reality remains.

Wolcot treated a large number of his contemporaries as he treated George III., taking them off with

infinite fun and frolic, and with a sense of enjoyment in that malicious pleasantry which takes the bitterness out of it; but the mimicry was so complete and the range so wide that Peter Pindar was as much dreaded by his possible victims as laughed over by the public, on whom he lavished the riotous outpourings of his mirth in the shape of little poetical pamphlets, which flew from hand to hand. He was bribed by Government at last, it is said by a pension, but that is a story of doubtful authority. There seems no doubt, however, that he did execute an arrangement with the booksellers which must have delighted him heartily for the sake of the practical joke that was in it. He got them to grant him an annuity of £250 a year for the copyright of his works, and lived for more than twenty years in the enjoyment of this pension, when the works in question had sunk into the limbo of publications out of date. Probably this amused him as much as any "taking off" he ever succeeded in. His personal appearances are few in the society of his time. Gifford, provoked by some of his many assaults, published an epistle to Peter Pindar, all pompous abuse and rancour, without a gleam of the witty malice of his antagonist, in which Wolcot is described as

> "A bloated mass, a gross blood-boltered clod;
> A foe to man, a renegade from God."

This, apparently, was too much for the temper of the satirist, who waylaid Gifford and attacked him with a cudgel; which, however, it is said, was turned against himself, and the result was a beating and humiliation, not to the Quarterly Reviewer, who,

we feel sure, deserved it much more, but to Peter. "A Cut at a Cobbler" was his revenge. Such squabbles, however, are too petty to deserve a record. Wolcot seems to have been a Bohemian of the coarsest type, although, curiously enough, the finest of fine personages, Beckford, the author of *Vathek*, is one of the few to speak for him, describing him as "a delightful companion, and the best storyteller he ever heard;" and we hear of him afterwards as showing magnanimous courtesy to another writer of the refined and cultured type, Isaac D'Israeli, than whom no man could be more unlike himself.

Wolcot is little more than a digression from our immediate subject, for his home would seem to have been in the darker depths of town life, not among our decent *bourgeoisie* of literature; and we return to the circle whose homely life and high ambitions are our immediate subject in the person of Thomas Holcroft, who was one of the friends and intimates of Godwin, and belonged to the same sphere. Holcroft, however, was of lower origin than the minister's son. He was the son of a shoemaker, and himself spent a portion of his youth in that speculative trade, varying it with the life of a groom in training-stables at Newmarket—until he suddenly found that he could write, and that the editor of a London evening paper would give him five shillings a column for his productions. But neither literature nor shoemaking got him bread, and he was about to enlist in the East India Company's Service when he was picked up by a theatrical recruiter in search of odd men, and thus began his

connection with the theatre. His autobiography, which is a fine and original piece of writing, though he had no education but what he had himself picked up at chance moments in stables or on roadsides, breaks off at this period, giving us very little information except in respect to his youthful experiences as stable-boy and groom; and when years after he re-emerges into sight in London, he is already permanently established as a play-writer and general *entrepreneur* in literature. It would be rash to say that Holcroft was the originator of the system of adaptation from the French, which has so largely tinctured the dramatic literature of our own time; but we are not aware that it had been further exercised than in translations and borrowings from Molière and other established writers, when the *Figaro* of Beaumarchais created an excitement in Paris which roused the interest of London managers. Holcroft had no sooner heard of this than he determined to rush over to Paris (not so easy a matter in those days) to make himself master of the new production. It was not printed, and the French manager had no idea of communicating the new work to an English stranger; it was necessary, therefore, to resort to other means. Holcroft accordingly, with the help of a French coadjutor, adopted an original plan. They went to the theatre "every night, a week or ten days successively," and learned the play by heart. It was translated immediately, and produced in London very shortly afterwards; and for this, which his biographer justly says was due "more to Mr. Holcroft's industry and enterprise than to his

genius," he received six hundred pounds, "besides a considerable sum for the copyright." This was in the days when France was lying in the calm of expectancy before the storm, dreaming fine philosophical dreams of human perfectibility and the rights of man, and applauding, without a notion of what might come of it, *Figaro's* satirical commentary on the Count's advantages and qualities, "Qu'avez vous fait pour tant de bien? vous vous êtes donné la peine de naître, et rien de plus." A little later Holcroft translated the works of the King of Prussia in "twelve or thirteen volumes," at which he worked night and day in order not to be forestalled, and for which he received twelve hundred pounds. It is a feature of the time as much as any other, that it should have been worth a publisher's while to give so large a sum for the "works of the King of Prussia." Unless his Majesty kept a private journal full of State secrets and gossip, no such trade importance would attend his productions now.

These strenuous exertions, not of a much higher class of labour than the paternal shoemaking, kept life afloat. But some of Holcroft's plays had real vitality, and one at least, the *Road to Ruin*, still maintains its place upon the stage.

Another member of the group was Mrs. Inchbald, whom the others admired and applauded—a beautiful and brilliant woman, poor but provident, who had been from early youth dependent upon her own exertions, and had kept her reputation and her freshness through the vicissitudes of an actress's life, before she

came to the more peaceful career of a successful author. Other figures flit to and fro through the misty scene. Ritson, the savage editor of the early English ballads, of whom there is an uncomfortable sketch in the life of Scott, and whose wild temper and vegetarian crotchets have found a more permanent place in history than his collections; and on the other extreme of sentimental gentility, Merry, and the other melodious elaborate songsters of the so-called Della Crusca School, upon whom Gifford directed his bitter and spiteful satires. At a later period Hazlitt joined this literary circle, then Leigh Hunt; and it began to be assailed as the "Cockney School" when *Blackwood's Magazine* and its skirmishers came into being. The epithet would be most completely merited, but for the contempt implied. They were all Londoners, citizens living a homely town life, deep down underneath all the glitter of fashion, having their shabby meetings, their thrifty simple dinners—Lamb's card parties on the Wednesday being by far the finest things we hear of;—but always respectable in this, that they worked hard, and were constantly at work, with eyes open to every possibility of a want in the way of literature which the British public might deign to exhibit. They earned their living as laboriously as any other trade then going, and after they had earned it, yet added a virtue, and produced some *fine fleur* of intelligent observation, some tale or piece of reasoning which was their present to the world. Had anything but literature been their profession, a better example of the brotherliness and clinging together of

a kindly craft and trade could not be, nor of the industry and perseverance which are the best preservatives of the working man. Whatever irregularities might be in their lives, they held close to their work, and stood by each other with exemplary fidelity. If the venerable popular fiction as to the rivalries, quarrels, and mutual hatred of literary persons were not so deeply rooted, we might hope that this example among so many would make an end of the prejudice.

Nevertheless, as they were not perfect, quarrels did arise in the little community — hurricanes of sudden wrath from time to time. In Godwin's case these little discordances, *démêlés* as he calls them, were often very hot and stiff. "The same calm temperament which enabled him to dispense with much which is often thought of the essence of religion, seems to have kept him free from any feeling which can be called love," says Mr. Kegan Paul in his biography, "except the one great passion of his life: and even this was conducted with extreme outward and apparent phlegm. Friendship stood to him in the place of passion, as morality was to him in the room of devotion. All the jealousies, misunderstandings, wounded feelings, and the like, which some men experience in their love affairs, Godwin suffered in his relations with his friends. Fancied slights were exaggerated; quarrels, expostulations, reconciliations, followed quickly on each other, as though they were true *amantium iræ*. And his relations with women were for the most part the same as those with men. His friendships were as real with the one as with the

other, but they were no more than friendships." We must give one example of these storms, which is tragi-comic in the highest degree. What its occasion was has been long forgotten, but here is the fierce little epistle which Holcroft, his friend and brother, discharged at Godwin on some one of the small provocations of ordinary life:—

"SIR—I write to inform you that instead of seeing you at dinner to-morrow, I desire never to see you more, being determined never to have *any* further intercourse with you of any kind. T. HOLCROFT.

"I shall behave, as becomes an honest and honourable man, who remembers not only what is due to others but to himself. There are indelible, irrevocable, injuries that will not endure to be mentioned. Such is the one you have committed on the man who would have *died* to save you."

This letter, postscript, italics, and all, is a typical example of the kind of correspondence which is called feminine, but which is no more confined to the intercourse of women than are many other things which the language of society appropriates to them. The belligerents made it up, we need hardly say, and were soon as warm friends as before.

The dawn of the French Revolution, which was the great event of the time, and to which the historian in every sphere must perforce return again and again, had an even greater effect upon Godwin and his friends than it had upon the musing and serious mind of Wordsworth. Holcroft had already some acquaintance with France, and no doubt had drawn in a little of the contagion of those opinions which had leavened French society, and made it possible for Figaro, with

his free comments, to be listened to and applauded; and as the tide of Revolution rose a great excitement rose within the bosoms of those eager thinkers and observers scattered over London. One of the smaller singers of the time, Helen Maria Williams—who in her youth had figured in Dr. Johnson's society, one of the ladies with whom he drank innumerable cups of tea —and who had even held some correspondence with Burns: had lately returned from a residence in France, where she had known many of the philosophers and revolutionaries, and at her lodging in London the men of the little society would meet and talk as name after name came uppermost. The enthusiasm which Wordsworth has described was swelling everywhere—

> "Good was it in that dawn to be alive,
> And to be young was very heaven!"

For was it not the sunrise of freedom, and of a universal bettering of mankind and purifying of the world? Now at last, for the first time, the chains and trammels imposed upon the race by tyranny and unjust laws being thrown off, was the world to gain assurance of what man was, how noble, how generous, how largely endowed. Godwin and his friends were no longer young, but their political opinions were all the stronger and more rigid from the absence of that fluid atmosphere of youth; and if they had less chance of seeing the complete and glorious renovation of everything earthly which was about to take place, they were still young enough to lend a helping hand to its completion. They formed themselves into a club of Revolutionists—before which it is curious to hear

one of its members preached, at a city meeting-house, with some inaugural services of a religious character —and exchanged addresses and congratulations with the French leaders. The letters of this obscure knot of petty citizens, with scarcely one name of any note among them, to the men who had seized the very helm of State and were masters for the time of the fortunes of a great nation, are wonderful in their calm assumption of equal importance and similar hopes: and still more amazing is the didactic verbosity with which they address their compliments to the Convention. "So admirable and illustrious an example cannot be lost," is the language of one letter; "the proceedings of the people of France will secure tranquillity and all the virtues of patriotism to themselves, and a dawn of justice and moderation to surrounding nations."

It is curious that while we are thus informed on every side of the excitement and enthusiasm caused by the Revolution, we have so little opportunity of judging of the impression produced by the blood and horror that so soon followed that wonderful dawn of promise. Wordsworth alone unfolds the alarmed pause and tremor of spirit, the shock and pang of disappointment which had so great an effect upon his mind. That there remained in England, notwithstanding all that happened, a strong party opposed to all hostile intervention on the part of England, which considered the declaration of war which followed as a sort of national crime, and whose faith in the ultimate justice of the French cause was strong enough to live through the Terror itself, is evident;

but we have to trust to our imagination to picture forth what were the feelings with which English sympathisers must have looked on while the new-born Freedom rolled her garments in blood, and all the frenzies of a mad populace were displayed before high heaven. In the case of political partisans and philosophers, the effect no doubt was less than that produced on younger and simpler enthusiasts, and there is no evidence that Godwin, for instance, was moved by it at all.

In the meantime, these English sympathisers had a little excitement of their own. Twelve members of the Revolutionist Club, of whom Holcroft was one, were indicted in London for high treason, as Muir and Palmer had been in Scotland. Godwin was not included in the number, for he was not given to violent speech, and consistently disapproved in his calm philosophy of all violent action; but he appeared instantly in print on their behalf, describing the accusation against them as "an attempt to take away the lives of men by a constructive treason, and out of many points, no one of which was capital, to compose a capital crime." If there was, however, any intention on the part of the Government to hang or behead this group of intellectual rebels, which seems extremely unlikely, it was at once balked by the jury, which acquitted the first brought before them. Holcroft, who had delivered himself up when he heard of the prosecution, unnecessarily, and with a somewhat melodramatic determination to identify himself and not accept the loophole of escape held

out to him by the unwilling judge before whom he appeared—was kept for a week or two in Newgate awaiting the trial which, so far as he was concerned, never came. He supposed that he was the object of a more subtle prosecution afterwards, that his plays failed, and theatrical managers and audiences were prejudiced against him by the Government and its myrmidons. Whether this was the case or not it is now impossible to tell: but it might well enough be that the public, frightened to death by all that was going on in France, and full of the same unreasoning prejudice which in Edinburgh believed an innocent gentlewoman to decapitate chickens (by way of practice) with a toy guillotine, might for this reason have turned against the candidate for its favour.

Godwin, however, shaped his political utterance in a different way. When his more excitable associates were getting themselves into notoriety by noisy defiances of the Government, he was evolving in his steady yet fantastic brain his theory of what he called Political Justice. It was a theory extremely captivating to the mind of his time, to which Political Freedom was the last great discovery, a principle from which every good was to spring. Godwin's conception of Justice as the ruling principle of government was another name for absolute and boundless freedom. All laws, of whatsoever kind, all natural prepossessions, such as the preference which it is usual for a man to entertain for the members of his individual family, every restrictive power of government, every penalty exacted for the infringement of law, were breaches of this

fundamental principle—as was also the idea of property and bonds of every kind, social or spiritual. In creating a duty according to this theory, you created a wrong, and the sole rule of perfection was that every man should do what was right in his own eyes. Rousseau had given the world to understand that all government was founded on a Social Contract, the bargain by which men gave up a little of their natural freedom for the protection of law, and security of their lives and possessions. But Godwin abjured this expedient, and denounced all possessions, all securities, everything that involved the infringement of another's right to do what he pleased, as contrary to the supreme sway of justice. All law for him was wrong. He was no revolutionary: violence of any kind was out of his thoughts: he disapproved even, or at least was disposed to discountenance, all sudden changes. But in his decent obscurity, in the humdrum life and surroundings where he lived "indifferent honest," paying his way, infringing no law—this was his philosophical settlement of the complicated affairs of earth. It extended to every rule of the family as well as the State. "Marriage is law, and the worst of laws," he says: for naturally there is nothing which interferes in so fundamental a way with personal freedom. "Marriage is an affair of property, and the worst of all properties." It was, therefore, such a breach of justice as the human race ought not to endure. Education, in like manner, was an infringement of justice, since it was, he thought, "no more legitimate to make boys slaves than to make men so. No creature in

human form will be expected to learn anything but because he desires it." Thus, his theory of absolute right was to liberate man from every chain of duty and every rule of law, to abolish force and punishment, and to leave to every individual the undisturbed privilege of doing what he pleased. "Give to a State liberty enough" is his crowning sentiment, "and it is impossible that sin should exist in it."

We are apt to believe that men who profess such principles do so in the interests of the lawless and criminal, and that a desire to shake off the bonds of morality is at the bottom of every such system. But it would be doing injustice to Godwin to suppose this. He married his own wife honestly and fairly, notwithstanding his opinions: and those who make it a reproach to him that at a later period he insisted, contrary to his own system, on securing his daughter's rights and that of her child to future wealth and position by this very expedient of marriage which he had condemned, forget that he had adopted it in his own case, and had not shown any inclination to live without the sanction required by the existing code of the country. He was, indeed, one of those unusual though not altogether singular men, who are able to set forth and reason out to its logical (however impossible) end, the most deeply reaching and universally applicable philosophy, without feeling themselves under any practical necessity either to embrace it themselves or to apply it to others. He was no missionary. He asked no man to act upon what he said, nor did he feel impelled to act upon it himself.

His theory was independent of any of those limits which must have been imposed upon it, had the need of making it practicable occurred to him.

And at the same time, it is only just to add, that the real soul of his theory and that which commended it to enthusiast minds, was not the opening to universal license which it seemed to admit, but the generosity of virtue which it made possible, and the boundless trust in human nature which it set forth. "Impossible that vice should exist" in a State if it had but "liberty enough"! Mankind, universally, in its graver moments, knowing itself, has but one opinion as to the folly of such a sentiment. But, notwithstanding, it was and is a beautiful sentiment, full of chivalrous and magnanimous feeling, and the poetry of that faith in Man, the image of God, which has inspired more or less all great movements. The philosophy which is in fashion in our own day has taken a completely different turn, and knows of nothing but Law, rigid and unalterable, a system of which man is the puppet. But Godwin's theory was founded upon a lofty, if entirely overweening estimate of the power, independence, and natural virtue of mankind. Left entirely to his own instincts, to his own sense of what was good and what bad, undemoralised by fictitious restraints, judging for himself, guided by himself, it was a fine and noble idea that man would at once reach a state of high and voluntary virtue. His capacity for this, nay, the certainty that if left to himself he would prove his possession of every noble quality, was at the bottom of all those impassioned claims of right, and assertions of

universal liberty, which were the language of the time; and a passionate faith in human nature, a faith far superior to all teachings, either of reason or experience, was its inspiration. It does not seem necessary, however, to such a mind as Godwin's that he should even have possessed this faith. His passionless intelligence wrought out his theory without any concern for its application or practical use. It was a matter of logic to him, and fundamental truth. For his own part, he did nothing to disturb the constitution of existing things, had no objection to shape his course by it—and while laying down one law, obeyed another with great composure and unbroken phlegm, notwithstanding that he had that moment denounced it as a wrong to humankind. "I never for a moment," he says, "ceased to disapprove of mob government and violence, and the impulses which men, collected together in multitudes, produce on each other. I desired such political changes only as should flow purely from the clear light of the understanding, and the erect and generous feelings of the heart."

To "place the principles of politics on an immovable basis," and to supply "a less faulty work" than that of Montesquieu, was Godwin's professed purpose in the composition of this work, and it was evidently the subject of much discussion and expectation among the congenial minds surrounding him. During the year 1792 he describes himself as being "in the singular position of an author, possessing some degree of fame for a work still unfinished and unseen." When it was published, however, a theory

so novel and extraordinary met with somewhat harsh criticism even from the hands of those with whom the author had taken counsel, and with whom he had reasoned, if not of "Fate—free-will, foreknowledge absolute," and the ways of God to man, yet upon the subjects which had replaced these: "self-love, sympathy, and perfectibility, individual and general . . . justice and disinterest." The same journal which informs us of the perpetual talks and discussions on these subjects, in which the philosophical friends indulged, records also the unkind reception his system of thought met with from them. "Horne Tooke tells me my book is a bad book, and will do a great deal of harm," he says. "Holcroft . . . said the book was written with very good intentions, but, to be sure, nothing could be more foolish." These were two of the Revolutionists whom Godwin stood stoutly by when they were arrested on the imposing charge of high treason, and their criticism must have had a Brutus-touch of unexpectedness. But there were many consolatory evidences of sympathy and approval to restore the author's confidence, and he would seem even to have been able to persuade himself that his views were popular, as will appear from the following note:—

"In October I went into Warwickshire on a visit to Dr. Parr, who had earnestly sought the acquaintance and intimacy of the author of *Political Justice*. My position on these occasions was a singular one; there was not a person almost in town or village who had any acquaintance with modern publications that had not heard of the *Enquiry concerning Political Justice*, or that was not acquainted in a great or small degree with the contents of that work. I was nowhere a stranger. The doctrines of that work

(though, if any book ever contained the dictates of an independent mind, mine might pretend to do so) coincided in a great degree with the sentiments then prevailing in English society, and I was everywhere received with curiosity and kindness. If temporary fame was ever an object worthy to be coveted by the human mind, I certainly obtained it in a degree that has seldom been exceeded."

It is difficult to believe that any appreciable amount of general approval could be given to such a theory at any time, but as a matter of fact this publication, which affronted all the world's prejudices and most people's convictions, had the sanction of that prosaic but very real test, profit, to justify its author's idea of its popularity. Godwin received no less a sum than seven hundred pounds for his treatise, and it made him very widely and generally known, creating much interest and some enthusiasm. "We are told," says a contemporary, "that the poorest mechanics were known to club subscriptions for its purchase;" and even such an authority as Southey declares that, "faulty as it is in many parts, there is a mass of truth in it that must make every man think." "No work in our time," says Hazlitt, "gave such a blow to the philosophical mind of the country;" and the same authority speaks of its author as blazing "like a sun in the firmament of reputation—no one more talked of, more looked up to, more sought after." It is while recording, twenty-five years later, the entire overthrow of this reputation that the essayist describes—with no doubt some exaggeration—its extent and power.

"Was it for this that our young gownsmen of the greatest

expectation and promise — versed in classic lore, skilful in dialectics, armed at all points for the foe, well read, well nurtured, well provided for — left the University and the prospect of lawn sleeves, tearing asunder the shackles of the free-born spirit and the cobwebs of school divinity, to throw themselves at the feet of the new Gamaliel and learn wisdom from him? Was it for this that students at the bar, acute, inquisitive, sceptical (here only wild enthusiasts), neglected for a while the paths of preferment and the law as too narrow, tortuous, and unseemly to bear the pure and broad light of reason? Was it for this that students in medicine missed their way to lectureships and the top of their profession, deeming lightly of the health of the body and dreaming only of the renovation of society and the march of the mind? Was it for this, etc. etc., that Mr. Godwin himself sat with arms folded, and 'like Cato gave his little Senate laws'? or rather like Prospero, uttered syllables that, with their enchanted breath, were to change the world, and might almost stop the stars in their courses?"

This hyperbole, worthy of one of the chief members of the Cockney school, who has himself dropped into the mists of forgetfulness, is no doubt very extravagant. "The young gownsmen" who threw themselves at Godwin's feet are represented to us by no more (and at the same time no less) than young Shelley, who long after, in the flush of youthful caprice and contradiction, flung himself body and soul into the city shop and back parlour, to which by that time the philosopher had retired; the other youths who formed this enthusiastic train, resolve themselves into a few unknown and luckless lads, whose names appear in the list of Godwin's correspondents but nowhere else. Still there is no doubt that this strange essay in revolutionary philosophy attracted far more notice and comment than philoso-

phical essays even of the highest pretensions are apt to attain.

A year after the publication of the *Political Justice*, Godwin produced *Caleb Williams*, the work by which he is now most generally known. This extraordinary book has had a career—if we may use such a word in reference to a book—as extraordinary as itself. The subject is painful, and destitute of all the usual attractions of romance; the characters are vague and abstract, embodied principles rather than men (for women do not exist in its pages); and the style, though clear and lucid, has no special charm to fascinate the reader. Yet it has held its place from that time to this with the most curious tenacity, and could not be left out of any record of literature, though probably not a tenth part of the reading public has ever seen a page of it. It has stamped itself upon its age in all its harsh and unattractive force, and cannot be ignored. It is the parent of Mrs. Shelley's *Frankenstein*, and possessed of something of the same weird fascination. From beginning to end it is the conflict of two minds which is brought before us—the one in desperate defence of a terrible secret, the other inquisitive and prying till he has discovered it, and pursued by the consequences of his discovery afterwards as by an implacable fate. The story is in all likelihood known to the reader, though he may never have met with the book. Falkland, a vague Grandison of a sterner type, without any love-making on his hands, and of small stature,—a curious departure from the recognised type of hero, which em-

bodies every excellence, physical as well as moral,—attracts the warmest admiration and affection of Caleb Williams, the orphan youth whom he takes into his house and establishes as his secretary and favourite. Yet nevertheless when the young man hears the tale of a crime in which Falkland's name had been momentarily entangled, a suspicion immediately springs up in his bosom that this and nothing else is the secret of his master's melancholy. Falkland is a man of fortune and character—a *preux chevalier* of spotless honour, honest and generous, the champion of the poor, and the refuge of afflicted merit of every kind. The only shadow which has crossed his path is that caused by the mysterious murder of a man who had been his persistent enemy and rival, and who had just insulted him in the most unpardonable way before meeting his death. Before, however, suspicion has had time to form against him, Falkland defies and confronts it by demanding an instant investigation, and by producing what seem to be triumphant proofs of his innocence, which is soon after established beyond all possibility of doubt by the conviction of a farmer and his son, whom the murdered man had treated most cruelly, and whose guilt is brought home to them by the most conclusive proofs of circumstantial evidence. When this story is told to Caleb Williams, notwithstanding his profound veneration for his employer, the question, What if Falkland were the murderer after all? flashes across his mind and will not be shut out. The instant consciousness of the lad's suspicion, which the reader is allowed to perceive

in Falkland, converts him immediately to Caleb's opinion, and the short but exciting conflict of curiosity on the one side and fierce fear and self-defence on the other, has a painful interest which it is impossible to resist. But before the struggle has gone far, Falkland has been wound to such a pitch of agony, that, finding Caleb on the eve of investigating a certain chest, in which it is to be supposed the proofs of his crime are hidden, he suddenly brings the situation to a close by confessing that Caleb's guess is right, and that he is indeed, notwithstanding that the luckless Hawkins has died for it, the murderer of Tyrrel. This striking incident has given its name to the drama founded upon Godwin's tale, which still retains its interest, and has reappeared upon the stage in very recent days, the *Iron Chest.*

The rest of the tale is occupied by Falkland's deadly and relentless pursuit of the youth to whom he has thus been forced to unbosom himself, and whom he overwhelms with false accusations, imprisons, pursues, forces out of every refuge in which he has hid himself, until at last the unfortunate young man is driven to the point of denouncing his persecutor. That all this time Caleb should retain his affection for his master, and consider his secret as inviolable, seemed quite natural to the reader as to the victim, whose faith in his former benefactor is scarcely even shaken by the fact that he has been guilty of one cowardly murder and has permitted two innocent people to die in his stead; and this, it is needless to say, infers a wonderful amount of power in

the carrying out of the strange story. When the unfortunate Caleb, apprehended a second time on a false charge, and seeing himself on the verge of a hopeless imprisonment, bursts forth at last with his accusation, he is overwhelmed by remorse before he gets to the end of it, and the conflict of fine sentiment between him, the accuser, and Falkland, who, worn and emaciated, has come to hear the charge against him, is kept up to the end. "Mr. Falkland is of a noble nature," cries the young man when he has told his extraordinary and incredible story, at which all the assembly is gaping; "I proclaim to all the world that Mr. Falkland is a man worthy of affection and kindness, and that I am myself the basest and most odious of mankind." The criminal whose guilt he has just denounced is not to be outdone in high-flown generosity: "He rose from his seat, supported by his attendants, and to my infinite astonishment threw himself into my arms. 'Williams,' he said, 'you have conquered; I see too late the greatness and elevation of your mind:'" and determined not to outlive his reputation he dies, leaving his accuser in agonies of remorse.

The struggle thus terminated is the sole subject of the tale, for the story of Tyrrel and the events which led to his murder are merely reported to Caleb, and are of the slightest and most conventional description, without a touch of human nature or individuality. Nor is there one character in the book which can be said to take hold upon the reader. The hero and his adversary are abstractions, representatives on one side of what the author supposes an

elevated sense of honour, and on the other of intellectual curiosity. It is little recommendation to the public to say of a work of fiction that it embodies a philosophical theory, and probably very few who read the book now have the remotest idea what the principle was which it is intended to set forth—but nothing can be more distinct, when the attention is directed to it, than the meaning of the writer in this extraordinary tale. With a curious artlessness, as in a child's fable, he sets forth his moral: the fact that punishment must follow crime is the wrong upon which everything turns. But for this Falkland would have repented of his murder in a gentlemanly way becoming his character, and all would have been well; it is the existence of a degrading penalty, which he cannot endure to contemplate, which compels him to permit the execution of the two innocent victims, and to shower miseries upon the unfortunate Caleb Williams, who has no desire to denounce him, but whose "elevation and greatness of mind" he does not appreciate till the end. Caleb himself feels to his heart the mistake he has made in letting loose the terrors of the law upon the magnanimous and noble sufferer—a step which is alien to all his intentions, and to which he is driven only by desperation. The evils of judicial interference with the natural progress of the mind are brought in over and over again in the minor details of the picture. The scene in the prison, where Caleb is placed by Falkland on a false charge of robbery, has none of the riot and reckless jollity which other writers of the

day put into the same scenes. Each prisoner is overwhelmed with "his own internal anguish," and if a brawl does occur among them, it fades into speedy silence amid the preoccupied and thoughtful felons. "We talk of instruments of torture," cries the narrator; "Englishmen take credit to themselves for having banished the use of them from their happy shore. Alas! he that has observed the secrets of a prison well knows there is more torture in the lingering existence of a criminal, in the silent intolerable minutes that he spends, than in the tangible misery of whips and racks." On another occasion Caleb finds refuge with a romantic band of robbers, who act on the Robin Hood principle of taking solely from the rich and helping the poor. "I saw and respected their good qualities and their virtues," he says; "I was by no means inclined to believe them worse men or more hostile in their dispositions to the welfare of their species than the generality of those that look down upon them with the most censure." And Mr. Raymond, the head of this virtuous band, makes it clear, considering the question with great impartiality, that he and his followers are more sinned against than sinning.

"Those very laws," he tells the hero, "which by a perception of their iniquity drove me to what I am, preclude my return. God, we are told, judges men by what they are at the period of arraignment, and whatever be their views, if they have seen and abjured the folly of their crimes, receives them to favour. But the institutions of countries that profess to worship this God admit no such distinctions. They leave no room for amendment, and seem to have a brutal delight in confounding the demerits

of offenders. It signifies not what is the character of the individual at the hour of trial—how changed, how spotless, how useful, avails him nothing. Am I not compelled to go on in folly, having once begun?"

The virtuous steward Collins, who is almost the only amiable character in the story, expresses his benevolent sentiments in strict accordance with this rule. "It is more necessary for me to feel compassion for you than that I should accumulate your misfortune by my censures. I regard you as vicious, but I do not consider the vicious as proper objects of indignation and scorn," he says. Thus the author of the *Enquiry concerning Political Justice* never loses sight of his theory.

St. Leon, which was Godwin's second novel, has not shared the curious immortality of *Caleb Williams*, nor does it in the least deserve to do so. It has something of the same connection, but in a different sense, with the *Political Justice*, which was ever uppermost in his thoughts, and owed its complexion, if not its existence, to Godwin's desire to modify the philosophical disapproval of the domestic affections and family life which had been expressed in that book. St. Leon is a French nobleman of the sixteenth century who dissipates his means, and is saved and converted into the *père noble* of a melodrama by the exertions of his wife: but after living a life of virtuous poverty with her and a group of sons and daughters, perfect both in mind and person, has the fatal secrets of the philosopher's stone and the elixir vitæ communicated to him, and loses everything that makes

life worth having, by becoming rich and immortal. The wife, Marguerite, who is his guardian angel, is said to be "drawn from the character of Mary Wollstonecraft," but the reader who braves the dust and cobwebs to look into the history of *St. Leon* will, we fear, find little help in identifying any human creature by means of this immaculate wife, who is a piece of perfection, and not reducible by any means to a human resemblance. The story is painful and monotonous, and few people, we think, will follow *St. Leon* to the end of his tale.

Godwin's later works were many—some of them not written under his own name, and most of them for daily bread, but without anything of the inspiration which necessity sometimes confers. His *Political Justice* has a certain place in the history of his time, and *Caleb Williams* retains a tradition of interest, the surviving shadow of that which it once excited: but this is almost all that can be said of a writer who once occupied so noticeable a place in the literary world. During his own lifetime, according to Hazlitt, his friend and contemporary, he had fallen as completely from that place as if it had never been his. "Mr. Godwin's person is not known, he is not pointed out in the street, his conversation is not courted, his opinions are not asked, he has no train of admirers, no one thinks it worth his while to traduce and vilify him, he has scarcely friend or foe, the world makes a point (as Goldsmith used to say) of taking no more notice of him than if such an individual had

never existed; he is to all ordinary intents dead and buried." But the strong individuality of the two works we have quoted, and his personal history and connections, will make his name always a known word. The husband of Mary Wollstonecraft and the father of Mary Shelley, his life is the centre of many branching lines which connect him with the higher circles of his time, as well as the city society to which he immediately belonged; and his steady clerkly presence, methodical and hard working, his tradesman-like adherence, amid the wildest views, to the routine and method which in principle he scorned, the tremendous revolutionism of his ideas, and the plodding and humdrum prose of his life, afford contrasts enough to give us a kind of paradoxical interest in the shopkeeping philosopher, with his small person and his large head full of notions, his sober and drab-coloured life, and the strange associations that cluster round it. Associated with that of his wife, his name became to many of his countrymen a synonym for atheism and every unruly passion; and the strange and painful story of his household might be taken to prove how little consonant with a virtuous and peaceful life were the principles on which his family was founded; but when we look at the man closer, and through the medium of Mr. Paul's able biography make acquaintance with the faded fortunes and forgotten tenor of that curious existence, the traditionary prejudice with which he has been regarded will be much modified, although there is little that is lovable or attractive in the story in what light soever it may be regarded.

Godwin was already within the boundaries of middle-age when Mary Wollstonecraft, a name which has been hated and contemned on all hands as that of one of the typical representatives of feminine Atheism, the most odious of all characters to the general mind —came into his life. She was a woman who had already experienced many hard struggles and much sorrow. She had been in some degree the bread-winner, in every way the support and guide of a family, neither so amenable to her influence nor so grateful for her exertions as would have been seemly, the members of which were in the habit of criticising their sister somewhat sharply in the letters which passed between them behind her back. Her father was an entirely disreputable person, from whom his children derived neither help nor countenance. To be brought up under such a shadow, or rather to struggle towards a better and higher life, in the depressing presence of a hopeless and degraded parent, is the breeding of all others which most revolts the mind of a high-spirited girl. Indeed, we might almost venture to say that the strong protestations in favour of something, varying from age to age, which is called the Rights of Women, with which society has been vexed and disturbed to an extent which has made it incapable of judging what is just in them—have risen almost invariably from women compelled by hard stress of circumstances to despise the men about them. Exception will probably be taken to this assertion both by the women themselves who utter these protestations and by the

critics; but yet we hold by what we have said. Women, no more than men, are exempt from the painful action of contempt; but when they are obliged to despise those to whom they would naturally look up, the irritation and misery of the sentiment is magnified tenfold. To say that her drunken father was the reason why Mary Wollstonecraft wrote the *Rights of Women* would be too strong an accusation; but this circumstance evidently brought a painful struggle into her life. And one of her sisters, the pretty one, the beauty of the family, "poor Bess," made an unhappy marriage, and had to be taken out of her husband's clutches almost in a state of frenzy by Mary herself. Thus degraded by the besotted folly of one man, and driven into energetic action by the unkindness of another, she certainly was. And it was not till after nearly ten years' experience of the "slings and arrows of outrageous fortune" that she put forth the book which was the first word of a long controversy. For the greater part of that time she had been engaged in teaching, and when in 1787 she came to London to "a little house in a street near Blackfriars Bridge" to endeavour, with the favour of good Mr. Johnson, the publisher, to get her living by translations from the French and little books for children, she was a woman nearly thirty, at an age when the deprivations of life and the "spurns which patient merit of the unworthy takes" are felt most keenly. Here she made a home for her brothers and sisters, supported her father in his village, and was the head of all the family concerns; and it was here

that the *Vindication of the Rights of Women* was produced.

The woman who wrote this book was not an abstract personage, or one of the class which is called strong-minded. "She was incapable of disguise. Whatever was the state of her mind, it appeared when she entered. When harassed, which was very often the case, she was relieved by unbosoming herself, and generally returned home calm, frequently in spirits," writes her publisher, Johnson. The sisters were flippant and impatient, and not dutiful to Mary's sway, though they came upon her in all their troubles. It was she who found them situations, sent one of them to Paris to improve her French, and generally cared for and watched over them. The woman who stands in this position to a family has, alas! a great deal of disenchantment to go through, and is taught the meanness that dependence produces, and the ingratitude of many which is so often the result of the self-devotion of one, in a bitter and effectual way. The disreputable father, the troublesome brothers, the brother-in-law who drove "poor Bess" to madness, were all, no doubt, before her proud and sensitive soul, in her mind's eye, as she wrote her book—she, too, amid the literary drudgery by which she earned her living, hoping to do something which should move the world and give a new tide to popular opinion.

We have said that society is too much vexed and irritated even yet by this subject to be able to permit it to be discussed with calmness: and still more was this the case in the end of last century, when for

the first time a woman ventured to complain of the inequality of her lot. But, indeed, though the time permitted a simplicity of language not possible in our day, Mary Wollstonecraft's plea for women is of the mildest description. She vindicates their right to be considered as human creatures, bound by the general laws of truth and honour, and with a generous vehemence assails the sentimental teachings of Rousseau and of the more virtuous moralists—Gregory, Fordyce, and even Mrs. Chapone—who take it for granted that the highest mission of a woman is "to please," and excuse in her, nay, recommend to her, those arts by which she can govern while appearing to obey. All that Mary Wollstonecraft asks is education for her clients and an exemption from that false and mawkish teaching specially addressed to "the fair," in which the eighteenth century was so rich, and which has not quite died out even among ourselves. In one sentence, indeed, in her book, she "drops a hint" which she fears will probably "excite laughter;" "for I really think that women ought to have representation instead of being arbitrarily governed;" but this opens the whole political question to her, and she allows that as women are "as well represented" as the great proportion of men, the grievance here is small. The case, it will be seen, is very different in our own days. Those who look up the old volume in its faded printing with the hope of finding anything in it that resembles the claims of some women now will be entirely disappointed. The question was in a much more elementary form in Mary Wollstonecraft's time.

The instructors who counselled a woman never to let her husband be sure of her love for him, that so she might retain her empire over him; to "be even cautious in displaying your good sense," lest this might be thought to "assume a superiority;" and to keep any information she may possess "a profound secret, especially from men"—nay, even to show no animation in dancing, lest it should be supposed a fault against delicacy—are the objects of her indignant criticism: and no one will say she errs in denouncing the whole pitiful system of fictitious existence, which was built upon such a foundation.

Nor does this feminine revolutionary suggest any violent remedy for the evil she deplores. The only thing she can think of—besides that broadest but most difficult of all panaceas, a general adoption of the principles of honest simplicity and truth—is a common education, of boys and girls together, with the object apparently of making them respect each other as brothers and sisters rather than look upon each other as hero and heroine in the brief drama whose stilted rules are supposed to affect the life of one of them from beginning to end. Many readers of mature age (the younger generations have scarcely heard the name) will recollect when Mary Wollstonecraft was a name of horror, considered as that of a female atheist and libertine, an offence to God and man. To such it will be a surprise to find that while her book is altogether free from revolutionary principles, either political or moral, it is also full of the warmest religiousness, and appeals

to the Maker, the Father of all. Here is her comment upon the remark of a sage that women might not learn the science of botany "consistently with female delicacy." "Thus," she cries, "is the fair book of knowledge to be shut with an everlasting seal. On reading similar passages, I have reverentially lifted up my eyes and my heart to Him who liveth for ever and ever, and said, 'O my Father! hast Thou by the very constitution of her nature forbid Thy child to seek Thee in the fair forms of Truth? And can her soul be sullied by the knowledge that awfully calls her to Thee?'" Such are the grievances upon which she dwells, and such the rights of women she claims. It is a curious lesson over again of the cruelty of general report and the violence of prejudice. The book would attract no attention nowadays, unless some reader might be struck with here and there an eloquent passage. Its complaints are too mild and general, its suggestions too little revolutionary, to count in the literature of the subject. One or two gleams of character there are, as when she calls Lord Chesterfield "a cold-hearted rascal (for I love significant words)."

After her book was published she went to France, and remained in Paris during all the misery and alarm of the Reign of Terror. Her account of the King's passage through the streets to appear before the Assembly, "moving silently along—excepting now and then a few strokes on the drum which rendered the stillness more awful—through empty streets, surrounded by the National Guards," while the inhabit-

ants of the houses along the way stood at their closed windows looking out upon this strange sight, is curiously impressive and picturesque. Courageous woman as she was, she was struck with a chill of fear to the bottom of her heart, and fancied she saw eyes glance at her through her glass door and bloody hands shaken. "I wish I had kept even the cat with me," she cries. "I want to see something alive. Death in so many frightful shapes has taken hold of my fancy." Perhaps it was this terror and her forlorn position, alone in such a confused and horrible scene, which made her cling to the support which was offered to her. But indeed she herself would probably have put forth no such excuse nor felt any necessity for it. Like Godwin and so many of those around her, she had come to the conclusion that marriage was wrong in itself, and she was not restrained by that thought of the inevitable injury inflicted upon the woman by all irregular relations, which sometimes prevented a man of generous temper from carrying out his own convictions in this way. The generosity on the woman's side was to scorn all dangers and run all risks. She united herself in Paris to an American called Finlay, whose faithful wife she was for about two years, when he availed himself of the freedom which the absence of the marriage bond left him, and deserted her—to the surprise and distress of the woman-philosopher, who naturally, but very unphilosophically, was heart-broken by the abandonment which it was the very point of her creed to make possible. That this freedom involved an ideal faithfulness, a constancy more than

romantic, was the conclusion she would have drawn: the primary idea of all enthusiasts of Mary Wollstonecraft's class being to credit the human race in general with this rarest and most beautiful of qualities. She was in London with her child when this terrible event occurred, and refusing to accept the annuity which the man whom she had considered her husband would have settled on her, she returned to her former occupation and took up the broken threads of her previous life. And whether it was that the society in which she lived was deeply imbued with the same principles as her own, or that her great qualities won for her, as has been seen in other cases, an exemption from the common rule, it seems certain that Mrs. Finlay, as she called herself for some time, was received by all her friends with very little, if any, diminution of respect.

It was at this period that she met Godwin, whom she had previously known, but formed no great acquaintance with. He had not been without passages of sentiment in his life before—and he was a man of taste, liking beautiful women and women of genius. Miss Alderson, who was afterwards Mrs. Opie, one of the gentle little chorus of minor poets, was supposed to have attracted him; and Mrs. Reveley, a person of great beauty, though otherwise undistinguished, who, however, had a husband living; and the beautiful actress and author Mrs. Inchbald. But the fair and injured woman who thought more entirely with him than any of these, soon seems to have fixed his choice. Southey describes her face

as "the best, infinitely the best," that he has seen among the *literati* in London, with an air of superiority which was disagreeable, but no other drawback, and eyes "the most meaning I ever saw." In the picture it appears an altogether noble face—pensive and with a sweet languor as of fatigue or sorrow past, but in every respect a pure and lovely countenance. Nothing could be more odd than Godwin's description both of their love and marriage. "The partiality we conceived for each other was in that mode which I have always considered as the purest and most refined style of love. It grew with equal advances in the mind of each. It would have been impossible for the most minute observers to have said who was before and who was after. One sex did not take the priority which long-established custom has awarded it, nor the other overstep that delicacy which is so severely imposed." "There was no period of throes and resolute explanation attendant on the tale. It was friendship melting into love." Godwin felt himself bound to explain the step he had taken to Thomas Wedgewood, the friend of Coleridge and his own, a munificent and tender-hearted benefactor of literary persons in general. Some people had accused him of inconsistency in marrying at all. "But I cannot see this," says the philosopher. "The doctrine of *Political Justice* is that an attachment in some degree permanent between two persons of opposite sexes is right, but that marriage, as practised in European countries, is wrong. I still adhere to that opinion. Nothing but a regard for the happiness of the individual whom I had no

right to injure would have induced me to submit to an institution which I wish to see abandoned, and which I would recommend to my fellow-men never to practise but with the greatest caution. Having done what I thought necessary for the peace and respectability of the individual, I hold myself no otherwise bound than before the ceremony took place."

Nothing could better show the pragmatic, wrong-headed, obstinate, yet on the whole right-feeling man. His wife and he lived in two houses in "the Polygon, Somers Town," one about "twenty doors off" the other, and called upon each other and wrote notes to each other daily with the most amusing play at being lovers and not married persons. The precise date even of their marriage was not known to their friends, the two philosophers being a little ashamed of having in spite of their principles done what everybody else did, and "submitted to an institution" which they disapproved. Then they were poor, and Mary had (it would seem) in some degree escaped the penalties of poverty so long as she remained unmarried. She was "so beloved by her friends that several, and Mr. Johnson in particular, had stood between her and any of the annoyances and mortifications of debt." This, we suppose, means that they paid her debts for her, which was a thing they could not continue to do for Godwin's wife—while he, on the other hand, had no desire to advertise himself as a married man for still more delicate reasons. "It is usual that when a man marries he commences new habits under such a totally new influence, and that he is lost to all his former

friends. Mr. Godwin spent a portion of every day in society, and was much beloved; his more intimate friends believed they should suffer from the change. *Two ladies shed tears when he announced his marriage* —Mrs. Inchbald and Mrs. Reveley." These exquisite explanations are from the pen of Mrs. Shelley, the daughter of this pair, and are given in perfect good faith and gravity. It is to the credit of both parties, however, that, notwithstanding all these inducements to keep it secret, the marriage was made known very shortly after it was contracted. The notes that passed between them in the meantime are pretty and playful enough, and show the most curious kind of united yet separate life. It might be a good experiment for impatient and fanciful people to make, to live thus "twenty doors off" or round the corner. "Did I not see you, friend Godwin, at the theatre last night?" his wife asks. "I thought I met a smile, but you went out without looking round. . . . I shall leave home about two o'clock. I tell you so lest you should call after that hour. I do not think of visiting you, because I seem inclined to be industrious. I believe I feel affectionate to you in proportion as I am in spirits, still I must not dally with you when I can do anything else. . . . Should you call and find only books, have a little patience and I shall be with you. Do not give Fanny a cake to-day; I am afraid she stayed too long with you yesterday. You are to dine with me on Monday, remember; the salt beef awaits your pleasure." Sometimes, however, she is a little cross, and wishes he would desire Mr. Marshal, a

useful friend of all work, whom Godwin seems to have kept about him, to call on her. "Mr. Johnson or somebody has always taken the disagreeable business of settling with tradespeople off my hands," she says with an aggrieved tone. "I am perhaps as unfit as yourself to do it, and my time appears to me as valuable as that of other persons accustomed to employ themselves." Here there is a little of the petulance of the beauty and queen of hearts, as well as of the conscious woman of genius, who has learned to expect to be exempted from the vulgarities of daily existence. But when Godwin is absent on a journey, their letters to each other are very natural and delightful. "And now, my dear love, what do you think of me?" he writes. "Do you not find solitude infinitely superior to the company of a husband? Will you give me leave to return to you again when I have finished my pilgrimage? . . . I wish I knew of some sympathy which could inform me from moment to moment how you do, and what you feel. Tell Fanny something about me. Ask where she thinks I am. Tell her I have not forgotten her little mug, and that I shall choose her a very pretty one." To this Mary replies from the Polygon. "I find you ever write the kind of letter a friend ought to write, and give an account of your movements. I hailed the sunshine and moonlight, and travelled with you scenting the fragrant gale. Enable me still to be your company, and I will enable you to peep over my shoulder and see me under the shade of my green blind, thinking of you and all I am to hear and feel when you return.

You may read my heart if you will. I am not fatigued with solitude, yet I have not relished my solitary dinner. A husband is a convenient part of the furniture of a house, unless he be a clumsy fixture. I wish you from my soul to be riveted in my heart, but I do not desire to have you always at my elbow, although at this moment I should not care if you were. . . . Fanny forgets not the mug."

This is all far too pretty and tender for two abstract philosophers who disapproved of marriage; and notwithstanding the portentous reputation of the author of the *Rights of Women*, there is nothing she writes which does not attract us towards the woman who, though she so little knew it, was but a few months from her grave. She died after the birth of her child, another Mary, she who was to be the love and wife of Shelley in after years. In Godwin's concise and business-like diary, where, even when his wife is very ill, he pauses to note "Pichegru arrested," there is one break, "10 seconds 20 minutes before 8——" and then some blank lines. His wife was dead.

But in its sorrow as in its happiness this literary community cannot help being tragic-comic. The very day of his wife's death Godwin began the most curious wrangle with Mrs. Inchbald—over her grave, so to speak. "My wife died at eight this morning," he wrote; "I always thought you used her ill, but I forgive you. You told me you did not know her. You have a thousand good and great qualities. She had a very deep-rooted admiration for you." To which the lady replies the same day with the greatest spirit, "You

have shocked me beyond expression, yet I bless God, without exciting the smallest portion of remorse. Yet I feel most delicately on every subject in which the good or ill of my neighbours is involved. I did not know her. I never wished to know her. Against my desire you made us acquainted. With what justice I shunned her your present note evinces, for she judged me harshly. . . . Be comforted; you *will* be comforted. Still I feel for you at present." Next day she wrote again with the most curious philosophy of consolation which we ever remember to have encountered. It is thus Mrs. Inchbald offers the comfort of her own experience to her friend, whose wife had been taken from him the day before:—

"I have too much humility to offer consolation to a mind like yours. I will only describe sensations which nearly a similar misfortune excited in me. I felt myself for a time bereft of every comfort the world could bestow; but these opinions passed away, and gave place to others, almost the reverse. I was separated from the only friend I had in the world, and by circumstances so much more dreadful than those which have occurred to you, as the want of warning increases all our calamities; but yet I have lived to think with indifference of all I then suffered."

These are very probably the experiences of many, but few have the courage to express them with such composure. Two days later Godwin resumed this strange correspondence, some special slight shown by Mrs. Inchbald to his wife having apparently come uppermost in his mind, curiously mingled with a hankering after that lady herself. "I must endeavour to be understood as to the unworthy be-

haviour with which I charge you towards my wife," he says. "I think your shuffling behaviour about the taking places to the comedy of the 'Will' disgraceful to you. I think your conversation with her that night at the play base, cruel, and insulting. There were persons in the box who heard it, and they thought as I do. I think you know more of my wife than you are willing to acknowledge to yourself, and that you have an understanding capable of doing some small degree of justice to her merits. I think you should have had magnanimity and self-respect enough to have showed this. . . . I thank you for your attempt at consolation in your letter of yesterday. It was considerate and well intended, although its consolations are entirely alien to my heart." All this went on while the poor woman lay unburied — a curious warfare of mingled praise and recriminations, notes like arrows flying from house to house, as so lately poor Mary's little notes had flown. "I could refute any charge you allege against me," Mrs. Inchbald retorts. . . . "As the short and very slight acquaintance I had with Mrs. Godwin, and into which I was reluctantly impelled by you, has been productive of petty suspicions and revilings, surely I cannot sufficiently applaud my own penetration in apprehending, and my own firmness in resisting, a longer and more familiar acquaintance." A more extraordinary correspondence never was carried on at such a moment. It ended a month after with a brief declaration on the part of Mrs. Inchbald that their acquaintance must end *for ever*. Probably, had she been less energetic,

Godwin would have asked her to marry him a few months later, which seems the only other alternative.

There is one other curious little controversy over this grave. One of the friends of Godwin and his wife declined to be present at her funeral, because he much doubted "the morality of assisting at religious ceremonies," to which objection Godwin sent the following curious reply:—

"I think the last respect due to the best of human beings ought not to be deserted by their friends. There is not, perhaps, an individual in my list whose opinions are not as adverse to religious ceremonies as your own, and who might not with equal propriety shrink from and desert the remains of the first of women. I honour your character. I respect your scruples. But I should have thought more highly of you if, at such a moment, it had been impossible for so cold a reflection to have crossed your mind."

It would not appear that Mary had ever shared her husband's entire want of religious faith: she believed, at least, in the existence of God; but it is strange to note that this man, who had married in spite of his principles, should now, in the midst of a company all adverse to religious ceremonies, have buried his wife with the specially solemn and striking ceremonial which the Church of England employs. But we go too far: Mary, it is true, was buried, as ordinary Christians are: but her husband was "too prostrate both in body and mind," though he had been equal to the writing of all these letters, to be present himself on the occasion.

This was in September 1797. In March of the following year he was in Bath, and there made the

acquaintance of two sisters, Sophia and Harriet Lee, who were among the most popular novelists of their time. The elder sister had been a well-known author for many years, and had long before established a school, after the fashion of Hannah More and her sisters, in Bath, where the Misses Lee were the ornaments of one of those little centres of literary society to which we have alluded in a former chapter. Harriet Lee, who was considerably younger than Sophia, had but lately begun her literary career when Godwin visited Bath. She was the author of by far the greater part of the series entitled the *Canterbury Tales*, of which the first volumes had just been published. These tales have fallen out of the knowledge of the present generation, but they were highly thought of by their contemporaries, and one of them is spoken of by no less an admirer than Byron with real enthusiasm. "It may be said to contain the germ of much that I have since written," he said. It was only a year after the acknowledgment of Godwin's marriage with "the first of women," and she had not been six months dead—when he formed this new acquaintance. It was somewhat early for a new sentiment, but the steady and argumentative way in which he immediately sits down to argue Harriet Lee into marrying him, is one of the most curious of the many characteristic episodes in his life. The lady resisted, perhaps not without a little enjoyment of the prolonged and delicate controversy, such as any novel writer and most women might be expected to feel. But she would not have him, notwithstanding all the

elaborate arguments which he brought forward to prove that she ought to have him, and the high ground he took of moral disapproval when she persisted in rejecting him. When he can say no more, he tells her that she acts in the spirit of the eleventh and twelfth centuries, putting out of sight the man, and asking only what he believes; but even this did not move her. A similar correspondence took place a year later with Mrs. Reveley, of whom it has been already told that Godwin would have married her before he met Mary Wollstonecraft, but for the trifling circumstance that she was herself married. This mistake was now, however, rectified by the death of Mrs. Reveley's husband, and in the same month Godwin summons the new-made widow to admit him to her presence, apparently in the position of a lover, scouting indignantly the suggestion that for some time it was better that she should not see him. "Is woman always to be a slave?" he cries. A little later he puts his proposal plainly, and indeed somewhat authoritatively, before her. "You are invited to form the sole happiness of one of the most known men of the age; of one whose principles, whose temper, whose thoughts, you have been long acquainted with, and will, I believe, confess their universal constancy. This connection, I should think, would restore you to self-respect, would give security to your future peace, and insure for you no mean degree of respectability. What you propose to choose in opposition to this I hardly know how to describe to you." What the poor lady did choose, was to marry, after a not

very long interval, somebody whom it is to be supposed she preferred to Godwin; but his intense disapproval of her on this subject, and angry sense of her folly in not immediately deciding in his own favour, are comical in the extreme. If the loves of the philosophers should ever be written,—and there is no doubt that the subject is a fertile and amusing one, instructive if not exactly edifying,—Godwin's serious setting forth of his own claims, and grave enforcement of the duty and propriety of marrying him upon the objects of his affection, and his grieved perception of their incredible folly in refusing to see this, would furnish one of its most characteristic chapters.

He married eventually in 1801, or was married by, a woman of no special pretensions—a widow with two children—Mrs. Clairmont, to whom he seems to have been for the rest of his life a faithful and even submissive husband. It was her energy and business qualifications which suggested the bookseller's shop and small publishing business, in which the last portion of his life was spent, and which was carried on chiefly by her for many years. Mrs. Godwin published not only many minor productions of her husband,—school-books and other compilations, most of them in a feigned name,—but brought out one of the prettiest of gentle interpretations—Lamb's *Tales from Shakspeare*, the work by which Mary Lamb did her best to eke out her brother's humble income, and in which he too had a share; and also *Mrs. Leicester's School*, Miss Lamb's only independent production. And here it was that young Shelley came in his

enthusiasm and met the girl whose young beauty and ardent uncontrolled nature helped him to shake himself loose of other legal bonds, and brought darker shades into the fatal spider's web of passion and theory which entangled so many lives. Godwin was very good to the children of his two marriages and of his two wives. It is one of the best features in his character; but we must return hereafter to the group of young women who grew up in his house and wove threads of connection, not happy or beautiful, between that humble shopkeeper's parlour and other names more distinguished than his own.

Godwin lived as far into the present century as the year 1836, and, strangely enough, owed the comfort of his latter days—he, the philosophical revolutionary and antagonist of law and authority—to a small sinecure office under Government. The "Yeoman Usher of the Exchequer" was the title which the author of the *Political Justice* carried to his grave—a curious mockery of fate. He pursued the profession of literature to the end of his life; but the culmination of his mind and reputation was in the last four years of the eighteenth century. It was at this period also that the stern Holcroft set his teeth against disease and pain, believing them to be within the power of the will to overcome and make an end of, as his friend believed vice and crime were to be annihilated by restoring to every man an uncontrolled and perfect freedom. The "sanguinary plot against the liberties of Englishmen"—that is, the State trial to which we have referred—came, as has been already described, to

nothing, and Holcroft went on writing novels and plays, until stung and sore at the neglect of the public, but trying hard to think himself a political martyr, he disappeared for a number of years from London, living on the Continent. The terrible story of his son's suicide gives a point of tragic interest to his life. The boy, an unruly lad of sixteen, had run away, and threatened if his father came after him to shoot himself,—which he did, to the horror of all beholders, on seeing that stern father approach his hiding-place,—an appalling incident, of which, however, nothing is said in the supplemental memoir with which Hazlitt concludes Holcroft's fragment of autobiography.

Another, but a wealthier and less laborious member of the same circle, and pseudo-martyr of the same period, Horne Tooke, had the distinction of being sent to the Tower, one scarcely knows why, since Holcroft was only in Newgate—a very invidious and injurious partiality. In connection with this individual, Rogers, in his recollections, tells a very odd anecdote of the paternal consideration of the Government for its prisoners. Tooke was kept, it appears, for a fortnight without anything to read or any writing materials, but at the end of that time three volumes were sent him—"one of Locke, one of Chaucer, and Wilkins's Essay"—books which had been found upon his table when he was arrested, and which it was afterwards supposed he must have been reading. He made notes upon the margin of the Chaucer, an old black letter copy, for his book, "The Diversions of Purley," which he

published shortly after. It is a work upon philology and grammar, with a sprinkling of philosophy, and is in the form of a long dialogue between himself and Sir Francis Burdett. The philology is eccentric and old-fashioned, and the book "diverting" to its author rather than its readers: but it is very unlike a work on which a revolutionary accused of high treason was likely to have been engaged. Horne Tooke was a wit and patron of letters in his way, and took in among his associates a larger and (conventionally) more important society than that of the literary community about Holborn, the laborious hacks of the generation.

Mrs. Inchbald, who has been repeatedly mentioned, was one of the first of the school of female novelists whose heyday was yet to come. She was at this time in the full glory of her literary career, "drawing her chair into the centre of the room" wherever she went, and gathering "the men" about her in a crowd, like a heroine of Miss Burney, though she was far too incisive and imperious for one of these gentle ladies. Her *Simple Story* is not a great work of art. It sets forth the caprices of a young lady, never known to the reader by any name more familiar than that of Miss Milner, who torments and is tormented by her guardian until they marry, and we are in hopes that a natural solution has come to all the questions between them: but, unfortunately, this hope proves without reason, as there is added a postscriptal volume, in which Miss Milner falls into dire trouble and dies, leaving a child, who is not permitted

even to see her stern father. At the final crisis, when this lovely and innocent but ill-used girl falls into her father's arms, the only words he can utter in his surprise are, "Miss Milner, dear Miss Milner!" for, of course, she is the image of her mother. The character of Dorriforth is intended to be one of lofty sternness, so noble, so highly exalted above any kind of levity, that it is impossible for him to tolerate or forgive it; but the novelist has succeeded only in making him a harsh tyrant—ungenerous and untender. Oddly enough, he begins by being a Catholic priest (Mrs. Inchbald was herself a Catholic), but is freed of his vows when he succeeds to the title of a cousin, a peculiarity almost as out of the way as Miss Milner's deprivation of a Christian name. Miss Milner herself is a lively portrait of an impulsive and capricious young woman, full of good impulses, but impatient of control, who is driven into sin at last by the cold superiority and practical desertion of her husband. Like many female writers, however, Mrs. Inchbald makes this polished tyrant the object of her chief care, elevates him into the most magnanimous of heroes when he acknowledges his daughter, and repays him with the love and gratitude of the young people upon whom he has inflicted so many blows to begin with. But there were no *Waverley Novels* in those days, no Jane Austen, no Maria Edgeworth: and the *Simple Story* was highly prized by its contemporaries. "Mrs. Inchbald was always a great favourite with me," says Hazlitt. "There is the true soul of woman breathing from what she writes as much as if you

heard her voice. It is as if Venus had written books:" and he proceeds to relate how the *Simple Story* had "transported him out of himself." "I recollect walking out to escape from one of the tenderest parts," he says, "in order to return to it again with double relish. An old crazy hand-organ was playing 'Robin Adair,' a summer shower dropped manna on my head, and slaked my feverish thirst of happiness. The heroine, Miss Milner, was at my side." Perhaps it is because a great many capricious young ladies, impatient of restraint, have been introduced to us in fiction, since then, that Miss Milner touches us less than she touched Mr. Hazlitt. But nobody nowadays suggests of a female novelist that "it is as if Venus had written books." The reader will remember how this Venus wrote to Godwin when his wife lay yet unburied. Afterwards, we find her in a letter congratulating him when one of his plays failed, on "having produced a work which will protect you from being classed with the successful dramatists of the present day!" A Venus, certainly, with a very sharp tongue. She had a hard life up to the time when one of her little plays caught the fancy of the public, and never gave up the economical habits which she acquired then. In a black gown, which had not cost more than a few shillings (one wonders in those dear days of the war, when everything was costly, what sort of a gown this could have been, or whether the description is a mere piece of masculine ignorance), she would take her place in the finest society, they say—though, to tell the truth, we do not see

much trace of it in the record—and fascinate everybody who came near her with a "face beautiful in effect and beautiful in every feature," which is her own modest description of it. "With acknowledged talents and ready social powers to make all other women jealous," says her most recent editor, "a Bohemian who wanted nothing, but still lived in her garret with virtue on twenty shillings a week . . . affectionate in nature, without passion, wholly feminine, she was amiable and lovable in an extraordinary degree." This last statement, we think, must be taken with caution. She was not an epitome of all the virtues, but a woman of a decided temper, not used to mince matters, and calling a spade a spade. But she too has gone out of the recollection of the reader, as all but the greatest are fated to go.

Mrs. Inchbald was not the only, or even the most remarkable of the female novelists who, with little ostentation or show in society, still had their successes and enjoyed them, and would occasionally with a little state and not ungraceful pedantry, and conscious but modest greatness, present themselves in a preface, like Miss Jane Porter, to explain and illustrate their work. This lady, and her sister Anna Maria, a much more voluminous writer, both flourished in London in somewhat finer regions, appearing in suburban parties, and haunts of lettered society, and enjoying a large share of popular favour, in the beginning of the century. They spent part of their childhood in Edinburgh. When Walter Scott was a youth at college he would play with these little girls,

and tell them stories, a contact sufficient to awaken the powers of fancy which lurked in them. The youngest published *Artless Tales* at twelve years old, the beginning of a long but forgotten series—all of the romantic-historical order; but none of these so struck the popular taste as *Thaddeus of Warsaw* and the *Scottish Chiefs*, the productions of her sister. These lofty romances delighted the primitive and simple-minded public, which as yet knew nothing of *Waverley*. It is possible that with a little modernising they might still excite and charm the readers of the *Family Herald*, sated with more modern splendour and mystery. To our critical eyes nowadays, the all-accomplished Thaddeus looks a little like a waxwork hero; but it will be hard to find in all our over-abundant romances of the nineteenth century so fine a gentleman, so disinterested a lover, an individual so certain to do what was right and best in every possible combination of circumstances. Count Thaddeus Sobieski has never any questioning with himself as modern heroes use—he never has any doubt how to act in an emergency. The splendour of his exploits and the depth of his misfortunes take away our breath. When he is introduced into London drawing-rooms as a poor teacher of languages, his conduct is as sublime in his humiliation as it was princely in his prosperity. No heart of woman could resist this union of qualities; and accordingly we find his path strewn with sighing ladies of the first fashion, to whom he behaves with an exquisite grace as well as a chivalrous honour, which secure their lifelong

gratitude, even when he has to repel their advances. We have, alas! no such heroes nowadays. The race has died out: and we fear even that a paladin so magnanimous might call forth the scoffs rather than the applause of a public accustomed to interest themselves in shabby personages of real life. But in the early days of the century the English reader was simple in his tastes, and less richly provided.

"The author to her friendly readers," in a preface full of old-fashioned stateliness, describes the origin of her tale by giving an account of some events of her youth. The little curtain rises and displays to us an enthusiastic girl, in the days when war was echoing on all horizons, coming nearer, and affecting the imagination more closely than has happened in our day —whose mind was fired with the same romantic pity and fervent sympathy for Poland and its heroes which thrilled the English heart when, not very long before, Campbell had made the shriek of Freedom when Kosciusko fell, ring into all the echoes. The great Polish general was in London, weak with wounds and downfall, when Robert Porter, the brother of the young writer, was taken to see him, introduced by a friend as "a boy emulous of seeing and following noble examples." He returned full of enthusiasm to tell every particular of the interview to the eager sisters, who could not hear enough of this wonderful hero. And they themselves in their walks had seen other pathetic sufferers, old soldiers, wan and poor, who had excited their anxious and painful sympathy. "One person," Miss Jane

says, "a gaunt figure, with melancholy and bravery stamped on his emaciated features, is often present to the recollection of us all. He was clad in a threadbare blue uniform greatcoat with a black stock, a rusty old hat pulled rather over his eyes, . . . his aspect that of a perfect gentleman, and his step that of a military man. . . . We saw him constantly at one hour in the middle walk of the Mall, and always alone; never looking to the right or the left, but straight on: with an unmoving countenance and a face which told that his thoughts were those of a homeless and a hopeless man——" Between this figure which crossed the young author's daily walks and the vision of the wounded general, and the excitement in the air, Thaddeus, the sentimental embodiment of everything that delights a girl's fancy, took his being. It was the first beginning of the historical novel properly so called; and it is Miss Jane Porter's boast that no less a follower than Sir Walter Scott "did me the honour to adopt the style or class of novel of which *Thaddeus of Warsaw* was the first—a class which, uniting the personages and facts of real history or biography with a contriving and illustrating machinery of the imagination, formed a new species of writing in that day." Sir Walter is said with his usual generosity to have acknowledged this obligation —as he did also to Miss Edgeworth, by whose national pictures he professed to have been inspired. It would have been strange if the former lady at least, whose romantic gift was not made keen by any insight into character, had not taken him at his word.

The book, as something new, was published with great doubt and timidity, but was immediately successful, and went through edition after edition. Kosciusko sent the enthusiast who so celebrated his country a medal with his portrait, and a lock of his hair; and many tributes of gratitude and admiration came to her from other Polish heroes. She was made "a lady of the chapter of St. Joachim," she informs us, by her admirers in Germany, "and received the gold cross of the order from Wirtemburg." Another present less sentimental she received from America in the shape of "a handsome rosewood chair," which was sent to her as a memorial of high and respectful admiration for the author of "some of the purest and most imaginative productions in the wide range of English literature." In default of other acknowledgments, perhaps some of the writers of the present day would not object to similar testimonials from that great Transatlantic audience which British writers are expected to minister to, like Spenser's angels, "all for love and nothing for reward."

Sir Robert Ker Porter, the boy who visited Kosciusko, the brother of these ladies, an artist of creditable reputation in his day, travelled much and published various interesting accounts of his journeys; so that the whole family was known in literature. Crabbe Robinson mentions some years after the "stately appearance and graceful manners" of the author of *Thaddeus*, whom he met at the house of Miss Benger, another writer of obscure miscellaneous literature, whose name has escaped even the diction-

aries. "Few ladies," he says, "have been so gifted with personal attractions, and at the same time been so respectable as authors." Indeed the literary women of this period seem to have been specially distinguished by their good looks. Mary Wollstonecraft, Mrs. Inchbald, Mrs. Barbauld, were all beautiful women. And if Mrs. Opie's soft bloom did not reach this height, she was at least pretty and charming. Mrs. Opie came from the learned coterie at Norwich to add her gentle reputation to that of the other rising novelists. Her stories are on a gentler level, domestic, moral, and with a view to the improvement of the reader, and continue to be readable in their way, though no new departure like that of the historical novel begun, as has been narrated by Miss Porter, is to be traced to her.

These ladies, however, pale before the reputation of Mrs. Radcliffe, whose name everybody knows, but whose works, great as their power and effect was in their day, are less known now than their merit deserves. The *Mysteries of Udolpho* is old-fashioned, but it is fine reading for those who have leisure to trace the meanderings of the threads so carefully entangled, and to follow the most ethereal of heroines through the piled-up troubles which make her reward all the sweeter when it comes: and that reward always does come. In those days novelists had a different conception of their art from that which encourages them now to leave their readers with a handful of unfinished threads to be twisted up into the web of life at their individual pleasure. Mrs. Radcliffe gives us no problems to

solve, no tales to complete; that is her business, not ours. She requires nothing of us but to listen and look on, keeping all our wits about us, never knowing when a door may open which will contain the solution of the mystery, or a casket may be unlocked out of which the secret may fly. Her landscapes, even now, though literature has done a great deal since then in the pictorial art, are full of an elaborate and old-fashioned yet tender beauty. She is not familiar with them, nor playful, but always at the height of a romantic strain; not graphic, but refined and full of perception. There are scenes that remind us of the learned Poussin, and some that have a light in them not unworthy of Claude before he was put down from his throne by the braggart energy and rivalship of Turner—since when the modern spectator has scarcely had eyes for those serene horizons and gleaming moonlight seas. Perhaps of all others Mrs. Radcliffe's art is most like that of the gentle painter whom people call Italian Wilson. There is a ruined temple in the distance, a guitar laid against a broken column; but the lights, how mellow and soft, the skies how full of tempered radiance, the pastoral valleys unprofaned by ungracious foot—full of the light that never was on sea or shore! The great feudal castle which she builds in the midst of the dewy chestnut woods has never been equalled for mystery. We lose our way in its corridors, its winding stairs, the chambers high up in the turrets, where sometimes it is a bleeding retainer, and sometimes an injured wife, who is hidden away from curious eyes. Down below,

in the vaulted passages underground, quarrels and passages of arms are rife, while in her spacious chamber the heroine listens and trembles—yet when the noises cease and her fluttered spirits are somewhat recovered, can always soothe herself by playing a plaintive air upon her lute, or by taking down one of the favourite volumes of her well-chosen library, in which she finds inexhaustible solace for all the evils of life.

It is not often nowadays that we come across anything that approaches to the ethereal perfection of Emily, a being too delicate almost to have even the finest love made to her, and the very sight of whom tames the fiercest. The gloomy chieftain Montoni tries, indeed, to force her will, to make her consent to a hateful marriage, and to sign papers disposing of all her fortune; but not one of his bravoes says a word to her that is not pretty, and her "spirits" are never "fluttered" by unseemly wooings. Valancour, though he errs and goes astray, is always the most respectful of lovers; and the captive, whom she supposes to be Valancour, and who is brought out of his dungeon by her humble retainers on this mistaken idea, how devoted, how unpresuming is his despairing adoration! Perhaps this is a little too fine for ordinary human nature; but it must be remembered that the school of realism and the canons of probability had nothing to do with Mrs. Radcliffe's art. The chief distinction of her power to the more commonplace reader is the skill with which she manages her mysteries—leading us from step to step through dim corridors, by uncertain lights,

which have a way of going out at the most thrilling moment, across deserted chambers, where curtains rustle and sliding panels open, and the supernatural is always feared yet always averted. She was a great deal too enlightened ever to have anything to say to a ghost. In those days the ancient love of superstition had faded, and the new groping after spiritual presences had not begun. There are a hundred apparitions in her pages, but they are all elaborately accounted for, and never turn out to be anything more alarming than flesh and blood. Sometimes the effect, so carefully worked up to, is a failure, as in the case of the mystery of the veiled recess in Udolpho, where our imagination refuses to accept as anything but a flagrant imposition and deception the waxen image of death which is supposed to shock every beholder out of his wits. But as a matter of fact, no mysterious terror which is not supernatural will stand investigation even by the most skilful hands. The reader is angry at being defrauded of his alarm, and knows that he has no right to be so frightened by anything that can be explained.

The character in these books, if it can be called character at all, is of a kind as old-fashioned as the costume. It is confined to the lovely creature who is the heroine, into whom the author throws herself as if the work were an autobiography. We doubt whether perhaps it is altogether well for fiction that Emily is so unlike the modern young woman who figures in the same position now. She who was too delicate to mention to her parents the declaration of love made to

her, and who modestly shrinks from the certainty that she can be indeed the object of such devoted affection, can scarcely be imagined of the same species as she who describes all her lover's kisses and glories in his fondness. But Emily, though she may be very unhappy, never makes an exhibition of herself. Concealment, like a worm in the bud, preys on her damask cheek; her smile grows more and more pensive, her gentle abstraction more deep; but she neither defies the people about her, nor cries out to heaven and earth to know why she should be so miserable. She takes a walk instead, and admires the scenery, and pens a little poem expressive of the melancholy that fills her soul; or she retires to her room and finds consolation in touching a few notes of her lute. And with a being so patient, so sweet, so humble-minded, everything of course comes right in the end. Udolpho itself cannot bring her to any evil; and her erring lover is so touched by the sight of her that he mends on the moment, without an effort, and all is well. There is a vein of sense, too, running through the diaphanous delicacy of this fair creature. She will not sign those papers with which Montoni is always threatening, nor be led to believe that the voice on the battlements is that of an apparition. When she finally escapes at last, her ride through the woods is almost as inspiriting as that of Mary Stuart in the *Abbot*, when she escapes from Lochleven. The picture altogether has a sort of personal attraction. There is no divided interest—everything centres in Emily; and Emily, even in the utmost flutter of her spirits, never disap-

points her admirers. She is always immaculate, never too much disturbed to take down a favourite volume or pen the following verses, or be consoled by touching a few notes on the lute.

There is an old-fashioned book of travels by the same hand which one feels is exactly what Emily would have written had she set out travelling with Valancour a few years after their happy nuptials. It is the *Journal of a Tour through Holland and the Western Frontier of Germany*, made in the summer of 1794, and is, besides much information, some still quite true and to the purpose, some showing how curiously everything has changed—full of charming descriptive sketches. The author in her preface explains her "use of the plural term" by the fact that her journey was performed in the company of her "nearest relation and friend," a periphrasis of the homely title of husband such as the nineteenth century has scarcely leisure for. Some of her ideas are quaintly insular and *rococo*, as when she tells us that travelling Englishmen "should be induced at every step to wish that there may be as little political intercourse as possible either of friendship or curiosity between the blessings of this island and the wretchedness of the Continent," and considers that to hear "the voices of a choir on one side of the street and the noise of a billiard-table on the other" showed "a disgusting excess of licentiousness." But if we smile at such indication of old-world sentiments, the reader will immediately find himself back again in the sweet company of the gentle Emily, when he reads such a description as the

following, the only difference being that Emily would have penned at least one copy of verses, if no more, as she gazed at the wonderful scene. The travellers were hurrying home from Holland, finding the war come uncomfortably close to them; indeed, when becalmed, and lying near the Flemish shore for about three days in that condition, they found "the firing before Sluys not only audible, but terribly loud." Here is a night and morning on the Channel, the echoes of the guns scarcely died out of their ears, but England and peace before them:—

"It was most interesting to watch the progress of evening and its effect on the waters; streaks of light scattered among the dark western clouds after the sun had set, and gleaming in long reflection on the sea, while a gray obscurity was drawing over the east as the vapours rose gradually from the ocean. The air was breathless; the tall sails of the vessel were without motion, and her course upon the deep scarcely perceptible, while above the planet Jupiter burned with steady dignity, and threw a tremulous line of light on the sea, whose surface flowed in smooth waveless expanse. Three other planets appeared, and countless stars spangled the dark waters. Twilight now pervaded air and ocean, but the west was still luminous where one solemn gleam of dusky red edged the horizon from under heavy vapours.

"It was now that we first discovered some symptoms of England. The lighthouse on the South Foreland appeared like a dawning star above the margin of the sea. The vessel made little progress during the night. With the earliest dawn of the morning we were on deck, with the hope of seeing the English coast; but the mists veiled it from our view. A spectacle, however, the most grand in nature repaid us for our disappointment. The moon, bright and nearly at her meridian, shed a strong lustre on the ocean, and gleamed between the sails upon the deck; but the dawn beginning to glimmer, contended with the light, and soon touching the waters with a cold gray tint discovered them,

spreading all around to the vast horizon. Not a sound broke upon the silence except the lulling one occasioned by the course of the vessel through the waves, and now and then the drowsy song of the pilot as he leaned on the helm, his shadowy figure just discerned, and that of a sailor pacing near the head of the ship with crossed arms and a rolling step. The captain, wrapped in a seacoat, lay asleep on the deck, wearied with the early watch. As the dawn strengthened, it discovered white sails stealing along the distance, and the flight of some sea-fowls as they uttered their slender cry, and then, dropping upon the waves, sat floating on the surface. Meanwhile the light tints in the east began to change, and the skirts of a line of clouds below to assume a hue of tawny red, which gradually became rich orange and purple. We could then perceive a long tract of the coast of France, like a dark streak of vapour hovering in the south, and were somewhat alarmed on finding ourselves within view of the French shore, while that of England was still invisible.

"The moonlight faded fast from the waters, and soon the long traces of the sun shot their lines upwards through the clouds, and into the clear sky above, and all the sea below glowed with fiery reflections for a considerable time before his disk appeared. At length he rose from the waves, looking from under clouds of purple and gold; and as he seemed to touch the water, a distant vessel passed over his disk, like a dark speck. We rose soon after, cheered by the faintly-seen coast of England."

The woman who made a minute drawing like this of all the gradations of the sunrise, though agitated by the sight of the French coast somewhat too near, and longing to see the English more plainly, was no insignificant artist. It is not like the dashing and graphic art of to-day; its touches are like those of a miniature, lingering and tender; but the sea and sky come before us as we read with a magical, soft clearness, reality, and truth.

There is very little known of Mrs. Radcliffe in

actual life. Her maiden name was Ward, and her husband was the proprietor of a newspaper. She was, we are told, "distinguished for her beauty," but "studiously avoided London society, and spent her time in excursions to favourite rural resorts, and in the enjoyments of her quiet home." Certainly she never appears in any of the gossiping chronicles of the time. The *Mysteries of Udolpho* is said to have brought her £500, and *The Italian* a still larger sum; but that is about all the record that has remained of them and of her.

In the last ten years of the century, so fruitful in original work, there existed a little group of painters who have all a certain place in the literary history of their time. The gentle Sir Joshua belongs more appropriately to a previous age, but Flaxman, Fuseli, and Blake all mingled in the society of which Godwin and his wife, Holcroft, and the other members of that bourgeois circle, were members. Of these men, all so remarkable in their way, the last named is the one whose niche in literature is the most curious. He is one of the strangest figures altogether that ever appeared in any record, and the sight of him, with his rapt and gleaming eyes, among those bustling old-fashioned streets, is like a visible appearance of the wild and ghostly among the most prosaic haunts of men. Blake was the son of a London tradesman, a respectable dissenting hosier, in the neighbourhood of Golden Square, a poor man, yet a creditable parent enough, who bound his boy apprentice at fourteen to the trade of engraving, then a most popular and

flourishing profession, in its heyday. It is not necessary for us to follow the elaborate story of his training, and the processes by which he attained his place in art, such as it is. He was little esteemed in his own day, though divined by a few humble friends and artful connoisseurs, and lay for many years in the depths of an almost impenetrable darkness, until in our own time the world came back to him, and rediscovered beauty and meaning in the work, which is still caviare to the general. A great deal of that work even his admirers will allow to be grotesque, and much of it is entirely unintelligible—neither, we believe, will it ever commend itself to unsophisticated and uneducated lovers of art. What is called its unconventionality and independence of rule is in reality only a conventional merit of a higher class than that usually called by the name, an art of symbol and indication discernible by the illuminated, but impossible to the ignorant. We do not believe that the merely intelligent beholder, capable of admiring beauty and loving poetry, but without any settled creed in art or foregone conclusion, would ever of his own accord find in Blake the wonderful genius and grandeur with which it is now usual to credit him. Here and there he produces something by a sort of accidental inspiration, as in the beautiful creation, full of heavenly joy and beauty, of the "Morning stars singing together," by which the most insensible must be moved. But it is unfortunate that his exponents should strain their demands so far as to require us to applaud in an equal degree all those weird

outlines flung about the windy skies, all the crouching horrors and staring wild apparitions which mope and gibber in so many of his extraordinary pages. His poems are scarcely more easy to characterise than his pictures. *The Songs of Innocence* and *Songs of Experience* were both the productions of his youth, most artless, sometimes most sweet—striking accidental melodies out of the simplest words, out of an idea half suggested, a sentiment of the ineffable sort, such as an infant, new out of the unseen, might give utterance to, could it give utterance at all. The reader is struck silent by the surprise of the little verse, a sort of babble, yet divine, which is beyond all dogmas of criticism or art, and yet touches the soul with a momentary soft contact as of angels' wings: nay, it is a silly angel, one might suppose a spoiled child of heaven, petted for its tender foolishness, as sometimes a child is on earth, but yet in its way celestial. The little snatches of verses should be sung by children in fair spring landscapes, among the new-born lambs, or under the blossoming trees, but to criticise them as literary productions is impossible; it would be a kind of offence to simplicity and innocence. Sometimes, indeed, there strikes in suddenly a stronger note, as, when after all that ethereal babble of lambs, and flowers, and little children, the dreamer, in his bewildered Arcadia, suddenly dreams of a Tiger—and running off in his wonder into a few wild glowing stanzas, asks suddenly, *Did He who made the lamb make thee?*

This strange visionary was one of the company

who met at Johnson's, the publisher, in St. Paul's Churchyard, at the afternoon dinners, homely and simple, where that good man assembled the authors whom he admired, and patronised, and controlled, with something of that half worship and half contempt which is the benign bookseller's most characteristic mood. Mary Wollstonecraft, in her pensive beauty, before she had ever left England, or stepped into any of the complications of her career, was the only woman of whose presence we are informed on these occasions, and Blake was employed to illustrate some of the children's books by which she then managed to live. A story is told of his interference to save Tom Paine from the consequences of one of his political indiscretions, in which the artist seems to have shown himself the most far-sighted of the company. It was at the moment when that unattractive revolutionary had been invited to France, but, in the meantime, he had been pouring forth sedition at a public meeting, of which he gave a flaming account to the company at Johnson's table next day. They were all republicans and sympathisers with France, though varying in their inclination to commit themselves; and all with an alarmed (and, as it seems to us, exaggerated) terror of the Government, and what it was likely to do. Blake, it is said, listened to Paine's brag with a certainty that steps would be taken at once against him. When he rose to leave, Blake laid his hand on the orator's shoulder, saying, "You must not go home, or you are a dead man!" and hurried him off on his way to

France. By the time Paine was at Dover, the officers were in his house, so that the champion of the Rights of Man escaped at least a temporary eclipse, if no more (though in those days they thought of nothing less than hanging), through the means of the mild and visionary dreamer. Blake was himself a great revolutionist in his innocent way, wearing the *bonnet rouge* about the streets as no one else ventured to do.

His first publication, if publication it can be called, is a strange little romantic episode in literary history. He did not know how to bring out his *Songs of Innocence*. The painter-mind has always odd little follies peculiar to itself, and to a man so used to employ his own hands and art, it would no doubt appear more natural to produce copies of his poems by transcription than to have them printed, which he seems never to have attempted. After much consideration and prayer, and conference with the unseen, he at last decided upon this extraordinary method.

"Mrs. Blake went out with half-a-crown, all the money they had in the world, and of that laid out one shilling and tenpence on the simple materials necessary for setting in practice the new revelation. This method, to which Blake consistently adhered for multiplying his works, was quite an original one. It consisted in a species of engraving in relief — both words and designs. The verse was written and the designs and marginal embellishments outlined on the copper, with an impervious liquid—probably the ordinary stopping-out varnish of engravers. Then the white parts of lights, the remainder of the plate that is, were eaten away with aquafortis or other acid, so that the outline of letter and design was left prominent as in stereotype. From these plates he printed off in any tint—yellow, brown, blue—required to be the prevailing or ground colour in his fac-

similes; red he used for the letterpress. The page was then coloured up by hand, in imitation of the original drawing, with more or less variety of colour in the local lines. He taught Mrs. Blake to take off the impressions with care and delicacy, which such plates signally needed, and also to help in tinting from his drawings."

In this strange way was produced the series of little books, now worth almost their weight in gold to the collector, each page of which was a separate work of art. These pages are very small, worded with firm, small writing, in a framework of wild design, with little illustrations intermixed—at once an etching, a frame, and a picture. In the sweet little quaint poem, perhaps the best known of any, called *The Lamb*, we have a child caressing a lamb at a cottage door, a flock visible under the shadow of a tree, and a fanciful framework of half-developed spring branches, in a space of five inches long. Thus, every page was a picture, with its little rhyme set in the middle. Nothing could be more characteristic of the primitive artist-mind. We confess, but for the wonder and quaintness of them, that we do not always see the beauty of these strange pages—and, no doubt, if he had not preferred this fanciful primitive way, he could have got his *Songs* published easily enough. But the strange little book, bound by the wife, who was Blake's docile pupil and seconder in all things, is naturally far more precious now than any printed book; and is, in itself, a touching evidence at once of the simplicity and practical straightforward impulse of the true artist. He could do it himself: why not

do it? What so appropriate, what so easy, as those tools which lay nearest to his hand?

Blake produced a great many books in the same way—for the most part merely wild ravings, of which the sober-minded reader will make neither head nor tail, allegories of earth and air, of Europe and America, with every kind of rambling mystic horror and wonder brought in. The book of *Thol, The Gates of Paradise, Jerusalem,* and a number more—books of prophecy he called them, and they are wild as the dreams of any crazed spirit trembling on the verge of madness. It is a great question among all the critics whether Blake was mad; certainly in many of his letters there is great room for the doubt; but of one thing there can be no question, that he was an early disciple of the strange system called among us Spiritualism or Spiritism—and before mediums or *séances*, dark or light, had been thought of, believed himself to be attended by all the phenomena which of late have caused so much discussion. What were the means of communication in which he believed is not told, but it is evident that he had an entire belief in the guidance and inspiration of spiritual beings, sometimes dead members of his own family, sometimes others, as the following solemn words will prove:—

"I am not ashamed, afraid, or averse," he says, "to tell you what you ought to be told—that I am under the direction of messengers from heaven daily and nightly. . . . I never obtrude such things on others unless questioned, and then I never disguise the truth. But if we fear to do the dictates of our angels, and tremble at the tasks set before us: if we refuse to do spiritual acts because of natural fears or natural desires—who can describe

the dismal torments of such a state? I too well remember the threats I heard, 'If you who are organised by Divine Providence for spiritual communion, refuse, and bury your talent in the earth, even if you should want natural bread—sorrow and desperation pursue you through life, and after death, shame and confusion of face to eternity. Every one in eternity will leave you, aghast at the man who was covered with glory and honour by his brethren, and betrayed their cause to their enemies.'"

These reproaches of his spiritual friends, and the struggle which he thus explains, arose in consequence of the attempt made during a three years' residence in the country to fix Blake down to ordinary work, engraving other people's sketches, painting portraits, and pursuing other commonplace occupations, for daily bread. He had been introduced to Hayley, the biographer of Cowper, a kind and friendly man, if a sentimental and somewhat mawkish poetaster, with the view of illustrating that writer's works and making money for himself; and with this purpose had taken a little rustic cottage at Felpham, near his patron, with which he was delighted for a time. But when Blake found that his time was to be fully occupied with task work, and his own wild original power of production limited and discouraged, his opinion changed, and the struggle arose which he has here described. He left Felpham in three years, renouncing the attempt to make money, and recurred to his original compositions and to a very precarious and limited livelihood. "I am again emerged into the light of day," he cries after his emancipation. "I have conquered, and shall go on conquering. Nothing can withstand the fury of my course among the stars of

God and in the abysses of the accuser." This is wild enough in all conscience. A little later he speaks of the composition of "a sublime allegory which is now perfectly completed into a great poem. I may praise it since I dare not attempt to be other than the secretary; the authors are in eternity. I consider it the grandest poem this world contains." Whether this was the *Jerusalem: the Emanation of the Giant Albion*, we are not exactly informed; but as it is the first "prophetic" work which follows this announcement, it is to be supposed this is what he means. Such language has been heard since from believers in the fantastic system which draws its tenets from the teachings of a piece of furniture. There is no tangible medium of communication mentioned in Blake's descriptions, but the disciples of this faith write as he did, utterances of which they do not claim to be more than the secretary, and of which they sometimes assert that they are great poems. His is a curious antedating of a mystery which is often very vulgar, and often very foolish, but which cannot be quite accounted for either by mere imposture or credulity. There was no imposture in Blake, and it is strange to find in him the phraseology which was utterly strange to his time, but has come to be a comparatively well-known jargon now. The great poem is the wildest rhapsody that can be conceived. But his early songs last, and will continue to do so: even they cannot be said to be appreciated by the uninitiated. They are little known and little likely to be known: but in their ineffable artlessness they are unlike anything

else of the time, or perhaps it might be safe to say, of the language, in which he remains a unique figure, unapproachable and alone.

To return more closely to the city circle, which we have, for the advantage of classification, allowed ourselves, with Southey and *Blackwood*, to call the Cockney School, we come to William Hazlitt, who has already been mentioned on various occasions, and who occupied a considerable place among his contemporaries, though none of his works were of a kind to live. He was not a poet or a philosopher, but a literary man in the closest sense of the word, impelled by circumstances and a vehement and lively intelligence to do such work as he was capable of in this fashion, rather than constrained by a higher necessity to utter what was in him for the advantage of men. It never has been proved, nor can it be proved, according to our belief, that to write for bread is bad for real genius, especially of the creative kind: but to write for bread when you have no message to deliver, no definite burden of prophecy, no story to tell, is a different matter. It is in these circumstances that literature is a dangerous profession. In most cases the professional writer has some gift besides, which buoys him up above the common merchandise of buying and selling. But Hazlitt had no philosophy and no story; he was an essayist, a critic, a commentator upon other men's works and ways, rather than an original performer. There is nothing in literature so difficult as this branch of the profession, which tempts the unwary with its seeming

ease. How far it benefits genius, to be trained and polished by all the appliances of learning, is still a moot point; but there can be no question that culture is the first essential to the literary man who does not possess genius, but only a talent for expressing himself, and the power of seeing intellectual subjects from a critical point of view. In his case the proverb does not tell, which declares that a poet must be born and not made—for he is not a poet, and his chances of commanding anything more than a present audience depend upon his thorough cultivation and knowledge. Hazlitt did not possess these qualities, and his books are already as old as if they had been written a thousand years ago, instead of half a hundred. He was, like Godwin, the son of a dissenting minister, inheriting the intellectual activities and natural political bias of the class along with its nervous sense of social slight and injustice.

"Hazlitt," says De Quincey, always depreciatory, "smiled upon no man, nor exchanged tokens of fame with the nearest of fraternities. . . . His inveterate misanthropy was constitutional, —exasperated it certainly had been by accidents of life, by disappointments, by mortifications, by insults, and still more, by having wilfully placed himself in collision, from the first, with all the interests that were in the sunshine of this world, and with all the persons that were then powerful in England. But my impression was . . . that no change of position or of fortune could have brought Hazlitt into reconciliation with the fashion of this world, or of this England, or of this *now*. A friend of his it was, a friend wishing to love him, and admiring him almost to extravagance, who told me, in illustration of the dark sinister gloom which sat for ever on Hazlitt's countenance and gestures, that involuntarily when Hazlitt put his hand within

his waistcoat (as a mere unconscious trick of habit) he himself felt a sudden recoil of fear as from one who was searching for a hidden dagger."

Talfourd describes the gloomy essayist as "slouching in from the theatre" to Lamb's cheerful parties, "his stubborn anger for Napoleon's defeat at Waterloo" somewhat "softened by Miss Stephens' angelic notes." On this point he was at variance, not only with the authorities, but with all patriotic and enlightened opinion, and characteristically resented the disagreement in which he found himself, even with the entire band of the French sympathisers, who were otherwise his brethren, but who held Bonaparte as a sort of Antichrist.

The temper of the man, and the almost ludicrous length to which political sentiment was carried, could scarcely be better shown than in the remarks of this sharp-tongued and unwary critic upon Coleridge when floating about in the chaos of London, in the unhappy years which preceded his final settlement at Highgate. Hazlitt, the reader will remember, furnished us with one of the most delightful pictures we have of Coleridge at Nether-Stowey, and Wordsworth at Alfoxden, in those days of early inspiration, when on "Quantock's airy ridge" they planned and pondered that conquest of the world, which they indeed accomplished, but not as they thought. "What has become of that mighty heap of thought, of learning, of humanity?" Hazlitt asks, when, far from the downs and the sea, and the hopes of youth, he finds the philosophic poet amid the dreary monotonies of

town, "it has ended in swallowing doses of oblivion, and writing paragraphs for the newspapers." And the keen political sectary goes on to find a reason for this decadence, with the semi-fictitious passion which was characteristic of him. It is because "Liberty, the philosopher's and the poet's bride, had fallen a victim to the murderous practices of the hag legitimacy" that the mighty had thus fallen. "Proscribed by court hirelings, too romantic for the herd of vulgar politicians, our enthusiast stood at bay, and at last turned on the pivot of a subtle casuistry to the *unclean side;* but his discursive reason would not let him trammel himself into a poet-laureate or a stamp collector," says the envious and bitter critic. Southey, the excellent, the kind, enjoyed one of these wealthy offices; and Wordsworth, self-absorbed as one of his own mountains, maintained his independence with the aid of the other; but Coleridge, incapable of any conditions, even that of furnishing birthday odes, "sank into torpid uneasy repose, tantalised by useless resources, haunted by vain imaginings, his lips idly moving but his heart for ever still." "Such," Hazlitt cries shrilly, "is the fate of genius in an age when, in the unequal contest with sovereign wrong, every man is ground to powder who is not either a born slave, or who does not willingly and at once offer up the yearnings of humanity and the dictates of reason as a welcome sacrifice to besotted prejudice and loathsome power!" The only comment we can offer after such a peroration is that of Mr. Burchell—"Fudge!" The author of *Fire, Famine, and Slaughter,* the most

fierce and powerful of political assaults, was wont to boast that it was he who had raised the circulation of the *Morning Post*, the paper in which that wonderful eclogue appeared, from an almost nominal rate to a large and profitable sale—an assertion of course denied by the editor of the paper, who attributed the increase to other causes, but yet showing how futile was this tattle about sovereign wrong or offerings of reason and humanity to loathsome power. Such was, however, the nature of the critic and the fashion of the time.

Hazlitt, however, had the gift of a brilliant style, and a great deal of incisive and irritable force, though the saucy critic of to-day would call his writing "tall," and pull his showy sentences to pieces; and he maintained a distinct place in the literature of his time, though few people recollect much about him nowadays. He was a born magazine writer, with much of that sparkle and petulant force which tells at the moment, and a ready power of response to any call, a "Contributor" of a valuable kind. Such a writer, with no independent gift of production, must lay his account with oblivion. But Hazlitt in his own person must, one cannot but think, have been more impressive and interesting than in print, for, in the beginning of the two volumes which his grandson has dedicated to his memory, there are various laudatory paragraphs, testimonials, so to speak, to his merit, which rank him much more highly. "I should belie my own conscience," says Charles Lamb, "if I said less than that I think W. H. to be, in his natural and healthy state,

one of the wisest and finest spirits breathing. . . . I think I shall go to my grave without finding, or expecting to find, such another companion." Higher praise than this no man could have, and when we add his biographer's simple estimate of his titles to immortality as an "Edinburgh Reviewer, London Magazine man, a person of letters who was thought big enough game, both in London and Edinburgh, for Mr. Gifford's and Mr. Blackwood's longest shot," we feel that we have said all for Hazlitt which it is necessary to say. To have been held up to public admiration by Christopher North, as a leading member of the Cockney School, was something; and notwithstanding his real literary power, a Cockney of letters he assuredly was, subjecting all things to the standard of a narrow circle, always defiant in his own person, and in angry resistance to all the larger influences, against which his arrogant independence and self-esteem revolted.

In his personal history we find some curious circumstances. He took a step which we do not remember to have heard of as resorted to by any man of character, before or since; being an Englishman, with no connection whatever with Scotland, he took advantage of the Scotch law of divorce to shake himself free of a wife who did not suit him. It is true that the lady was of the same mind, and very willing to aid in the strange operation, which was carried out accordingly. His motive was to be able to marry a young woman, the daughter of the house in which he lodged, who had roused him in

middle age into all the fervour of an early passion. Whether she was aware of the strong step taken by her elderly lover to open a way for her we are not told, but when he rushed back to London, a free man, to marry her, the girl put him off and played with him, and was finally discovered to be on much more affectionate terms with another lover. His fury and passion, and the letters which passed between the pair, and the terrible disappointment of his hopes, he put, red-hot with love and rage, into a book which he called the *Liber Amoris*. Such an exhibition never could be met with anything but laughter, and it has left a shade of permanent ridicule upon this fierce figure, once so active and loud, now so little known. At a later period he managed to marry another more soft-hearted woman; but any marriage must, we should suppose, have been of doubtful legality in the circumstances. The whole story is that of one who was anything but a happy man. He began his life with a very dry and lifeless exposition of philosophy *On the Principles of Human Action;* but all his other contributions to literature, except a *Life of Napoleon*, consisted of essays and criticism. His sketches of his contemporaries retain the interest which the work of an eye-witness always must have, but there is little that is profound or original in his criticism, much of which was spoken in the form of lectures before it found its way into print.

Of the same class, though with qualities so much more attractive that his memory is still fresh and pleasant to many readers, is Leigh Hunt, who, with

the same imperfect education and want of literary training, but with a spark of genius which makes up for many deficiencies, became a member of the same lively literary circle of newspaper and magazine writers, which more or less embraced all the names that have come before us. It is a curious proof of the difference that this little spark of genius makes, to contrast the productions of these two men, both of whom have produced a mass of miscellaneous comment on every subject under heaven, hundreds and thousands of pages which served to occupy and amuse, if not to instruct, the readers of their day, just as so many of ourselves do—with an amount of workmanlike skill which earns its daily recompense very honestly so long as it has no pretension to do more, but which is altogether inadequate to build a lasting literary reputation upon. Leigh Hunt, like Hazlitt, wrote largely in newspapers, in magazines, and reviews, and collected these writings into volumes which exist and are laid up on dusty shelves where nobody thinks of disturbing them. But Leigh Hunt did what Hazlitt could not do. There came out of his heart at least two exquisite little poems, which, to apply our favourite test, would, if all he ever wrote was swept away by some conflagration, linger in individual memories for generations, and flutter down orally through the mist of years, indestructible and sacred. One of these scraps of verse is the exquisite little fable called *Abou Ben Adhem:* the other, Lines addressed "To T. L. H., six years old, during a sickness." The former is so brief that, well known though it be, we

may quote it once more as Leigh Hunt's "title to the skies" of poetical remembrance and fame :—

"Abou Ben Adhem—may his tribe increase—
Awoke one night from a deep dream of peace,
And saw within the moonlight in his room,
Making it rich and like a lily in bloom,
An angel writing in a book of gold ;
Exceeding fear had made Ben Adhem bold,
And to the presence in the room he said,
'What writest thou?' The vision raised his head
And, with a look made of all sweet accord,
Answered, 'The names of those who love the Lord.'
'And is mine one?' said Adhem. 'Nay, not so,'
Replied the angel. Abou spoke more low,
But cheerily still, and said, 'I pray thee, then,
Write me as one that loves his fellowmen.'
The angel wrote and vanished. The next night
He came again with a great wakening light,
And showed the names whom love of God had blest,
And, lo! Ben Adhem's name led *all the rest*."

He who has left one such jewel as this has a claim upon his race surpassing that of the most excellent writing, the best criticism, the highest popular skill and adroitness in contemporary history. It is, indeed, the only claim that Time acknowledges short of actual creation or discovery. The clever writer who has in him, besides his writing and his cleverness, the something indefinable, unpurchasable, not to be manufactured or inherited, which can produce this little bit of verse, has a certain place secured to him for ever in the records of his language. But without this, vague miscellaneous writing, however clever, is nothing more than a profession, which earns its wages accord-

ing to its quality, and has no right to expect any more.

Leigh Hunt wrote in innumerable papers; some of these—for instance, the *Examiner*, which still exists after many changes—retain a sort of prejudice in their favour from his time, a vague idea of some literary grace and excellence superior to the ordinary, though it is long since all connection was severed between them and the original from which this prejudice came. And his stray articles and essays would fill—do fill—more volumes than it is easy to number. He was also the victim, in a more actual sense than Holcroft, Horne Tooke, and their companions, of a political persecution. Of that "sanguinary plot against the liberties of Englishmen," as Godwin calls it, which did these gentlemen so little harm, it is difficult to form any serious judgment now through all the heroics of the defendants, and in face of the fact that it came to nothing. Leigh Hunt's, however, was no sedition but a libel against the Prince Regent, the "Adonis of fifty," who had so offended the Liberal party in his time by that invariable and historical expedient of Heirs Apparent, the change of politics which follows a change of position from expectancy to power, that no mercy was shown him. Few people nowadays will strike a blow for George the Fourth, but the man who calls the head of a State Sardanapalus, and describes him as "a violator of his word, a libertine over head and ears in disgrace, a despiser of domestic ties, the companion of

gamblers and demireps," could scarcely expect, in an age of political excitement and arbitrary proceedings, to do so without remark. The printer and writer of the article were tried for libel, and sentenced to be imprisoned for two years, and pay a fine of five hundred pounds each. Leigh Hunt informs us that it was notified to them that "if we would abstain in future from commenting upon the actions of the royal personage" both penalties might be remitted; but this neither he nor his brother chose to do—and there is no doubt that he made a great deal of literary capital out of his imprisonment. His description of it, and the means he took to make it pleasant, is very characteristic of the man, and sets at once before us the sentimentalities and prettinesses which he brought into a sort of fashion. His room in prison was "papered with a trellis of roses, the ceiling coloured with clouds and sky, the barred windows I screened with Venetian blinds; and when my bookcases were set up with their busts, and flowers and a pianoforte made their appearance, perhaps there was not a handsomer room on that side of the water." He was permitted to have his family with him in this Bower of Bliss, and the satisfaction of beholding the surprise and delight of every new visitor at the transformation he had effected must have gone a long way to undo the pains of the confinement. Amateurs of decorative art in the present day will shudder at Leigh Hunt's skyey ceiling and trellis of roses; but he thought it very fine, and got true enjoyment out of his sentimental prison.

Leigh Hunt lived a long life, and wrote an interminable amount of prose, such as the world very willingly lets die. He produced a poem, the *Legend of Rimini*, a soft and novelistic version of the stern tale of *Paolo and Francesca*, in which critics were accustomed to say there are some "exquisite lines"—but the public has never cared very much for this poem. And a great deal of pretty writing came from Leigh Hunt—genial babble of green fields, pleasant enumeration of pleasant landscapes, and that kind patronage of nature which is so easy to a fluent pen, and carries with it a suggestion of delicate morality and a fine mind. At a later period he went to Italy on the invitation of Lord Byron and to join him—with the idea of setting up "a Liberal periodical publication" in conjunction with Byron and Shelley—a most curious project, which naturally came to nothing. We shall be obliged to return to this subject in our remarks upon the two great poets, at whose melancholy and prematurely ended lives we have now almost arrived.

Another most gentle and friendly figure which links itself on to this group, in the beginning of the century, by means of the Lambs, is Cary, the translator of Dante, he who had begun his poetical career under the wing of the Swan of Lichfield, and exchanged poetical complaints in that old-world coterie. Cary was as unlike as it is possible to conceive to the half-educated and restless writers above mentioned. He was a scholar born, and a wide and unwearied reader, keeping journals which are little more from

beginning to end than a list of books carefully mastered and annotated, a student whose library was his workshop, his field of action, the centre of his life. From his childhood he had exercised himself in the work of translation. "When he was only eight years old," we are informed, "I have heard him say pleasantly, laughing at his own precocious taste for translating and blank verse, that at that age he rendered a considerable portion of the first book of the Odyssey into his childish prose, and, having done so, cut it into lengths of ten syllables each, which he then wrote out under the persuasion that it was poetry." When he was a boy at Rugby, in a more advanced stage, he agreed with two of his friends "to attempt a metrical translation of the chief Greek poets." Thus the child was father to the man. His University career seems to have passed tranquilly without any special distinction, and he entered the Church in accordance with his father's wishes in due time, and was in 1797, when all the new poets and writers of the undeveloped age were at their fullest activity, the vicar of Abbots Bromley, newly married, and in the enjoyment of that perfect tranquillity and happiness which seem nowhere more likely to be attained than in a parsonage. Here he began, with a pleasant irregularity, by the *Purgatorio*, his great work. But it was not till 1805, when he had changed to another living, and was surrounded by children, that the first volume of the translation, beginning, as was necessary, with the Inferno, was published. It is amusing to find that it did not at all please Miss Seward, the "dear mistress," whose stric-

tures he listened to with affectionate patience, and who neither liked the original nor the translation. There is a proof of a certain superficial growth at least of culture and knowledge among us in the present day, in the frankness with which the people of that time expressed their opinions upon subjects which are now sacred from irreverent remark. Miss Seward frankly did not like Dante, and owned it. A "Muse" of society occupying her position nowadays might be of the same mind, but would not venture to confess as much. And she found Cary's translation to be defaced by obscurity and vulgarisms of language, which she set forth in a long, very long, letter, full of verbal criticism, though without convincing the author. But either the world was of Miss Seward's opinion concerning Dante, or, as is more probable, knew nothing about that great poet, and the translation fell dead and was no more heard of. The happy chance by which it was introduced to general notice and the light of day affords one of the prettiest of literary anecdotes. Cary had suffered great domestic griefs, which shook his being to its very depths, and, in the summer of 1817, was at the seaside at Littlehampton, sadly healing from one of those great wounds, and teaching his eldest boy, by way of occupation for his languid life. It is this boy, his biographer in after years, who tells the story.

"After a morning of toil over Greek or Latin composition, it was our custom to walk on the sands and read Homer aloud, a practice adopted partly for the sake of the sea-breezes, and not a little, I believe, in order that the pupil might learn to read *ore*

rotundo, having to raise his voice above the noise of the sea that was breaking at our feet. For several consecutive days Coleridge crossed us in our walk. The sound of the Greek, and especially the expressive countenance of the tutor, attracted his notice; so one day, as we met, he placed himself directly in my father's way, and thus accosted him: 'Sir, yours is a face I *should* know. I am Samuel Taylor Coleridge.' His person was not unknown to my father, who had already pointed him out to me as the great genius of our age and country. Our volume of Homer was shut up; but, as it was ever Coleridge's custom to speak—it could not be called talking or conversing—on the subject that first offered itself, whatever it might be, the deep mysteries of the blind bard engaged our attention during the remainder of a long walk. I was too young at the time to carry away with me any but a very vague impression of his wondrous speech. All that I remember is, that I felt as one from whose eyes the scales were just removed, who could discuss and enjoy the light, but had not strength of vision to bear its fulness. . . . The close of our walk found Coleridge at our family dinner-table. Among other topics of conversation, Dante's 'divine' poem was mentioned. Coleridge had never heard of my father's translation, but took a copy home with him that night. On the following day, when the two friends (for so they may from their first day of meeting be called) met for the purpose of taking their daily stroll, Coleridge was able to recite whole pages of the version of Dante, and though he had not the original with him, repeated passages of that also, and commented on the translation. Before leaving Littlehampton, he expressed his determination to bring the version of Dante into public notice; and this, more than any other single person, he had the means of doing in his course of lectures delivered in London during the winter months."

It is pleasant to find that much as Coleridge was in the habit of forgetting his promises and engagements, he did not forget this. On the margin of his notes for one of his lectures stands the memorandum, "Here to speak of Mr. Cary's translation:" and he

did so speak of it that "the work, which had been published four years, but had remained in utter obscurity, was at once eagerly sought for. About a thousand copies of the first edition that remained on hand were immediately disposed of, and in less than three months a new edition was called for," while, to crown all, both the *Edinburgh* and *Quarterly Reviews* re-echoed the praises that had been sounded by Coleridge, and henceforth the claims of the translator of Dante to literary distinction were universally admitted. Before this, Cary, joining in the universal verdict, had announced to his brother-in-law his meeting with Coleridge as "the most extraordinary man I ever met with." It is pleasant, amid the accounts already quoted and those given by De Quincey and others of the chaotic character of the poet's lectures, to find so delightful an incident connected with them.

The work thus recommended to the world has kept its place ever since as the standard translation of Dante. Others may have greater literary excellence, but its faithfulness and completeness, and the, on the whole, dignified and sufficient manner in which the work is executed, give it a lasting value which no other translation has attained. Cary was guilty of many pipings of original song besides, which did not meet with such approval. We have already quoted the tender and sympathetic verses addressed to Lamb, who had found in the learned and gentle clergyman a congenial spirit. In the latter portion of his life Cary quitted the parsonage, over which the

death of several children had thrown a lasting gloom, and received an appointment which exactly suited him in the British Museum. This brought him into the circle of literature in London, but not to its high places or among its fashionable votaries. He lived in Bloomsbury, as simply and as gravely as he had lived in the country; devoted to his books, and spending all his days in the great library which it was a happiness to him to watch over and care for; writing occasional magazine articles like the rest, and sending forth other essays in translation, among which was a version of the "Birds" of Aristophanes. But after ten years' enjoyment of this modest post, Cary's mind was disturbed and his position altered by the sudden elevation over him of the late well-known and celebrated Antonio Panizzi. Everybody is agreed nowadays that a more admirable appointment than that of Panizzi could not have been made; but it is curious to see, looking back, the hard case of the good Cary, who, whatever his business qualifications may have been, was a devoted lover of books, and the most creditable of public servants. The promotion of his subordinate, however, was more than his gentle temper could bear, and he addressed a spirited protest to the Lord Chancellor; but he had no success in his effort to undo the decision, and accordingly resigned his appointment after ten years' service. The loss, however, was not one that affected him vitally, and a few years later a pension was granted to him. He used the leisure thus forced upon him in miscellaneous literary work, and edited, among other

things, a series of English poets—which, by the way, is a thing which almost every notable writer of the period seems to have done. What has become of all these series, specimens, extracts, new editions, one after the other, it is impossible to tell. But there was scarcely a bookseller or unoccupied author who did not plunge into some undertaking of the kind.

Cary died peacefully as late as 1844, in a gentle old age, consoled by the love and attention of his son. He seems to have had no special place in society, being always retiring and shy; but the Lambs, after their retirement, when Temple Lane was a thing of the past and they had gone into their suburban exile, came once a month to dine with him in Bloomsbury, a little festival which was looked forward to with pleasure on both sides. "We were talking of roast *shoulder* of mutton with onion sauce; but I scorn to prescribe to the hospitalities of mine host," is Lamb's playful suggestion in reference to one of these friendly dinners. Cary was brought in contact with other members of the craft at the "Magazine dinners," given generally by the publishers, which kept the contributors to the *London Magazine* together. At one of them a rustic author made his appearance whom we may note in passing, a gentle poet, for whom something friendly was done by the lovers of literature of the time, but who was not great, and had it not in him to attain any height. Among the gentlemen, he was a little out of place, and did not know what to do with himself. "The most interest-

ing of the party was the poet Clare. He was dressed in a labourer's holiday suit. The punsters evidently alarmed him, but he listened with the deepest attention to his host" (who was Cary himself, the dinner being for some forgotten reason at his house). It required something beyond the range of a rustic versifier to make out what all the wits were after—Lamb, with his rolling stammer, skilfully exercised to the advantage of his genius, and all the younger talkers used to the quick exchanges of skilful conversation.

The mention of the *London Magazine*, to which this school of writers was attached, and in which the *Essays of Elia* appeared, bring sbefore us a brief but curious romance of literature, the tragic episode of which John Scott, the editor of that publication, was the hero. It is difficult to find any distinct record of this writer and his fate, though there are innumerable allusions to him in the literary memoirs of his day. His writings have not been collected or preserved save in the pages of his *Magazine*, but nothing can be higher than the testimony borne to his qualities by his friends and literary coadjutors. "He was," says Sergeant Talfourd, "a writer of remarkable candour, elegance, and discrimination," and his power of managing the staff of contributors, which included so headstrong and petulant a member as Hazlitt, and one so eccentric and uncertain as De Quincey, was marvellous. Talfourd invests his unfortunate end with an almost ludicrous mystery. "In a luckless hour," he says, "instead of opposing the little per-

sonalities of Blackwood by the exhibition of a serene power, he rushed with spurious chivalry into a personal contest, caught up the weapons he had himself denounced, and sought to unmask his opponents, and draw them beyond the pale of literary courtesy . . . and at last met his death almost by lamentable accident in the uncertain glimmer of moonlight, from the hand of one who went out resolved not to harm him." This melodramatic picture was not needed to turn into a painful horror the ridicule which had hitherto attended literary duels, such as the intended encounter, for instance, between little Moore and little Jeffrey, of which (especially as it never came to anything) it was impossible to think without a laugh. In the present case the contest of sharp words ended in real bloodshed, and the laugh is quenched in horror, mingled with a painful sense of entire incongruity. The lively dinners round the publishers' table, where Lamb punned and Hazlitt raved, and gentle Mr. Cary had his learned little joke, on one hand—and the wilder mirth of Ambrose's parlour, where Christopher North flashed forth the light of his genius, and the Shepherd talked the divinest of nonsense, on the other, came thus into contact for a moment with a sharp and stern touch of wrong-headed reality, incongruous human passion, out of place and out of date, half bathos, but altogether tragedy, which it is most painful to contemplate. This incident leaves a scar across the peaceful story. It is, fortunately, the only accident of this kind which we are called upon to record.

The society in London, which we have thus attempted to set before the reader, had nothing to do with the great world. If they touched occasionally upon the outskirts of that fairer sphere, their lives were entirely spent in a different atmosphere, in dingy houses and small rooms, in streets populous and noisy, or lost in the dulness of a homely suburb. The Polygon, Somers Town, the small streets about Holborn, the Temple, a more dignified title: where the air was not so heavy as it is nowadays in the most elegant regions, and where there was little talk of fog: but where everything was Town, and the atmosphere had all the bustle and the limitations of the streets. Little notes conveyed by hand, droppings in on this and that acquaintance, quick response of communication at all times, and a murmur of perpetual talks, rustle through this limited world. They are spectators, in minutest detail, of each other's existence, but the larger stream of life does not touch them. There is no coming and going of imperial interests, not even any greatness of passing strangers, or influences out of literature, the action, always so much needed among professional persons, of the ordinary world. This great advantage, which is shared by so many people in the higher classes, who are quite unable to profit by it, was unknown to this world underground. Hence the justice of the injurious title of the Cockney School, and hence much of the narrowness and petty personality of men whose views were large enough. The largeness of their views, passing all bounds of the practical, was indeed

due to the same limitation which contracted their lives. They knew at once too little and too much for the *rôle* they assumed—too much of books and too little of men. To all fine spirits shut up in a petty world, the capabilities of nature, if once emancipated from its bonds, are far more like to become the objects of passionate belief than is possible with those who, seeing all varieties of mankind pass before their eyes, learn the limits of hope, and get somehow to understand how little is likely to be accomplished. The little circle of *bourgeois* writers turning round and round in its own orbit, changing its combinations chiefly by means of personal quarrels and controversies, made little progress, though it believed in so much. It missed its full development because it was thus cabined and confined.

Nevertheless, there are other names which bring us westward into the more open air of the great world, where everything is more spacious, more free, more varied. Leigh Hunt was a friend of Byron, of Shelley, and the younger group of poets. These names lead us, though ever so slightly, to the wider region, even when they themselves can scarcely be said to belong to it. Mackintosh, who had written his *Vindiciæ Gallicæ* in his young days, to change into views much more moderate as maturity and all its mixed motives came, linked them with public life and a philosophy less ideal and impossible than that of Godwin. Hazlitt lived next door to Jeremy Bentham. Thus the one sphere touched the other in which, after a different fashion, with more space and

less concentration, life and thought, imagination and reason, satire and fancy, were being as fully exercised in a different way.

It is perhaps scarcely just to add to the end of this humble circle the name of a poet never attaining the first rank, yet reaching a gentle eminence on which his name, more than his work perhaps, is still fully known — Bryan Waller Procter, more universally known in his lifetime as Barry Cornwall: but it is difficult to allot him his place elsewhere. His name involves that of Basil Montagu, whose stepdaughter he married, and to whose circle he belonged. This gentleman, the early patron and friend of many men of letters, holds a sort of middle position between the bourgeois circle and the finer groups of society. He was a man of fine literary taste, who loved to gather about him such members of the literary profession as came within his reach, and who, beginning with Godwin and his peers, kept up for a long time the friendly tradition, and encouraged young authors and courted old ones, as has always been the custom with those better-off people who, without the faculty or impulse of writing themselves, have yet a fondness for the society of those who exercise that craft, and love to hold on by the skirts of literature. The hospitable house of Basil Montagu has been hardly and ungratefully used in recent days; but every such circle is liable to be so treated when it has been subject to the inspection of critical eyes, without the glamour of gratitude or kindness in them. Mæcenas becomes easily ridiculous, and no doubt there were men in

Rome who thought little of that patron of the arts, considered him to be seeking but his own glory in drawing the wits about him, and called his company a menagerie, and Horace no better than a parasite. It is needless to say to the reader who it is that has done this, or to excuse the heedless words, never intended to go out of his own study, of Thomas Carlyle. The truth would seem to have lain, as usual, between the two statements: that Montagu, himself a dabbler in literature, loved its professors, yet liked at the same time to find himself at the head of a band all more or less known, about whom he was as likely to make mistakes as others of his contemporaries were, nor less or more, but for the excellence of all of whom he was ready to go to the stake — is true enough. And some were ungrateful, but some devoted to his kindly service. It was a home in which many young men were received with kindness, and notably the raw young Scotsman with Annandale strong about him, its very earth upon his shoes, who tried so hard in his early * letters to screw himself up to a pitch of seemly admiration, but in his old age had long forgotten that, and remembered only the oddities of the company, and some whiff of the lion-hunter in the heads of the house. This kind and cultivated household was in Bedford Square, half-way between the Cockney School and the ladies and gentlemen of higher social pretensions who would occasionally meet their humbler brethren in the drawing-room, which lay midway. Of all the writers who flourished there,

* Privately printed by Mrs. Procter.

and were applauded to the echo, Procter is the one most closely connected with this little centre of refinement and cultivation. He appeared in 1815 with a volume of dramatic sketches, in which he too had felt himself moved to the attempt, to "try the effect of a more natural style than that which had for a long time prevailed in our dramatic literature." His success in this was small; for among the modern writers for the stage no one as yet has found the means of adapting a poetic diction with marked success to a dramatic story. He found his way, indeed, to the stage, and had the satisfaction of seeing his works acted by such performers as Macready and Charles Kemble; but his success, so far as this goes, was one of the day, and his plays are unknown, we fear, to any theatrical repertory. He was the schoolfellow of Byron at Harrow, and lived long enough to be a kind critic and counsellor far on in the century to another generation of poets. His shorter lyrics, many of them very melodious and graceful, are what has lasted longest. And he had the gentle succession, which somebody has said is peculiar to the greatest men—he handed on his little lamp of genius to his daughter, and thus prolonged a mild but beautiful fame.

WILLIAM GODWIN, born 1756; died 1836.

Published Sketches of History in Six Sermons, 1782.
Inquiry concerning Political Justice and its Influence on General Virtue and Happiness, 1793.
Things as they are; or, The Adventures of Caleb Williams (novel), 1794.
The Inquirer (series of essays), 1796.
Memoirs of Mary Wollstonecraft Godwin, 1798.
St. Leon (novel), 1799.
Antonio; or, The Soldier's Revenge (drama), 1800.
Thoughts on Dr. Parr's Spital Sermon, 1801.
Life of Chaucer, 1803.
Fleetwood; or, The New Man of Feeling (novel), 1804.
Faulkner: A tragedy, 1807.
Essay on Sepulchres; or, A Proposal for Erecting some Memorial of the Illustrious Dead on the Spot where their Remains have been interred, 1808.
Lives of Edward and John Phillips, the nephews of John Milton, 1815.
Mandeville (novel), 1817.
Treatise on Population, 1820.
History of the Commonwealth of England, 1824-7.
Cloudesley (novel), 1830.
Thoughts on Man, 1831.
Lives of the Necromancers, 1834.

MARY WOLLSTONECRAFT, born 1759; died 1797.

Published Thoughts on the Education of Daughters (pamphlet), 1786.
Vindication of the Rights of Woman, 1791.
Moral and Historical View of the French Republic, 1792.
Letters from Norway, 1795.

THOMAS HOLCROFT, born 1745; died 1809.

Published Alwyn; or, The Gentleman Comedian (novel), 1780.
Duplicity (comedy), 1781.
The Deserted Daughter
The Road to Ruin, 1792 } plays.
Anna St. Ives, 1792.
Hugh Trevor, 1794.
Bryan Perdue, 1805.
A Tour in Germany and France.
Many Translations from the French and German.
Autobiography.

Mrs. ELIZABETH INCHBALD, born 1753; died 1821.

Published Mogul Tale (farce); Such Things Are; The Married Man; The Wedding Day; The Midnight Hour; Every Man has his Fault; Wives as they were, and Maids as they are; Lovers' Vows (plays), from 1784.
A Simple Story (novel), 1791.
Nature and Art (novel), 1796.
Edited by her—
British Theatre, 1806.
Modern Theatre, 1809.
Memoirs (posthumous), 1833.

Miss ANNA MARIA PORTER, born 1780; died 1832.

Published Artless Tales, 1793-5.
Walsh Colville, 1797.
Octavia, 1798.
The Lakes of Killarney, 1804.
A Sailor's Friendship and a Soldier's Love, 1805.
The Hungarian Brothers, 1807.
Don Sebastian and the House of Braganza, 1809.
Ballad Romances and other Poems, 1811.
The Recluse of Norway, 1814.
The Feast of St. Magdalen, 1818.
The Village of Mariendorpt, 1821.

Published Tales of Pity for Youth.
The Knight of St. John, 1821.
Roche Blanche, 1822.
Honor O'Hara, 1826.
The Barony, 1830.

Miss JANE PORTER, born 1776; died 1850.

Published Thaddeus of Warsaw, 1803.
The Scottish Chiefs, 1810.
The Pastor's Fireside, 1815.
Duke Christian of Luneburgh, 1824.
The Field of Forty Footsteps, 1828.
Sir Edward Seaward's Diary, 1831.

Mrs. RADCLIFFE, born 1764; died 1823.

Published The Castles of Athlin and Dunbayne, 1789.
The Sicilian Romance, 1790.
The Romance of the Forest, 1791.
The Mysteries of Udolpho, 1794.
The Italian; or, The Confessional of the Black Penitents, 1797.
Gaston de Blondeville; or, The Court of Henri III. resting in Ardennes } posthumous.
St. Alban's Abbey (metrical) } posthumous.
Poetical Pieces } posthumous.

WILLIAM HAZLITT, born 1778; died 1830.

Published On the Principles of Human Action, 1805.
Eloquence of the British Senate, 1808.
Views of the English Stage } 1817.
The Round Table } 1817.
The English Comic Writers, 1819.
Characters of Shakspeare's Plays, 1817.
The Dramatic Literature of the Time of Elizabeth, 1821.
Table Talk, 1821-2.

Published The Spirit of the Age, 1825.
Notes of a Journey through France and Italy, 1825.
The Plain Speaker, 1826.
Life of Napoleon, 1828-30.
Conversations of James Northcote, Esq., 1830.

Rev. H. F. CARY, born 1772; died 1844.

Published Sonnets and Odes, 1788.
Ode to Kosciusko, 1797.
Translation of the Inferno, 1805.
Translation of the Divina Commedia, 1814.
Lives of the English Poets.

CHAPTER VI.

THE COUNTRY.

It is so difficult to follow a distinct classification in respect to the literary workers who are continually crossing each other's paths, appearing and reappearing in different links and windings of the same historical way, that some arbitrary mode of division is necessary. And we think it better, having given such glimpses as we have been able of one section of the literary world in London, to pause for a little upon those who do not appear much in the centre of national life at all, before proceeding to the other greater and more showy region which touches the highest circles of the state, and belongs to what is called and has always been called "Society." The reign of the literary coteries in the provincial towns had begun to die out about the time of the new century; but yet we find many points of light all over the country, where men and women pursued their varied intellectual pursuits, with less delightful complacency indeed than that which distinguished the Swan of Lichfield, but still with a deeper sense of their own superiority and importance as enlighteners of the earth, than is general now among the unobtrusive professors of

literature. So near London as Hampstead, Joanna Baillie, the most modest of women, but the most ambitious of female poets, lived for the greater part of a long life. We cannot feel that, great as her reputation was, and high as was the opinion expressed of her by many of her most distinguished contemporaries, we should be justified in leaving out that prefix and ranking her boldly among the poets, without distinction of sex. That she was superior to many men of her time is no reason for claiming for her an approach to the circle of the greatest: and to name her with Wordsworth or with Coleridge would be folly, although there is now and then a Shakspearian melody in her blank verse which pleased the general ear more than the stronger strain of the *Excursion*, and stood no unfavourable comparison with the diction of Coleridge's dramas. It is evident that she herself aimed at a reputation not inferior to theirs, and that the consciousness of a lofty purpose, and the applause of "those qualified to judge," which she received in no stinted measure, and indeed the favour of the public, which demanded several editions of the first volume of her *Plays on the Passions*, gave her a certain dignified sense of merit, such as of itself impresses the reader, and disposes him to grant the claim so gravely and modestly put forth. Personally no one could be less disposed to plume herself upon her genius, or claim the applause of society; but that she seriously believed herself to have produced great works, which the world would not let die, is we think very clear. And so thought Scott, whose opinion

has so much right to be received and honoured. A woman might well think much of her work, of whom he had said that "the harp" had been silent "by silver Avon's holy shore" for two hundred years, until—

> "——She, the bold enchantress, came
> With fearless hand and heart on flame,
> From the pale willow snatched the treasure
> And swept it with a kindred measure;
> Till Avon's Swan, while rang the grove
> With Montfort's hate and Basil's love,
> Awakening at the inspirèd strain,
> Dreamed their own Shakspeare lived again!"

This praise, out of all proportion to its object, and which we would not now apply to the greatest of recent poets, was given in all good faith; and Joanna Baillie received it with a sober composure which has nothing of vanity or self-consciousness in it. There is no instance indeed in literature of a self-estimation so lofty, yet so completely modest and untinctured with elation or self-applause. Her ambition reached to the very highest heights of fame, and she believed that she had attained an elevation near them. This of itself is always impressive to contemporaries, who never can be entirely certain how posterity is to receive their estimate of excellence, and who are indeed so continually proved to be wrong in it. Not only from her own generation, however, but to the present time, respect and a kindly veneration have ever attended her name. We honour her fine purpose and intention, if we forget the works in which she believed she had carried them out, and would still

meet with almost indignation any attempt at unkindly criticism upon a poet so pure and high-toned, a woman so worthy of all respect. Her gentle and lovely life had no incident in it. She was one of those maiden princesses about whom there always breathes a soft and exquisite perfume, too delicate for common appreciation, of that reserved and high virginity, which, never reaching to any second chapter of life, involves an endless youth. This is not what we mean when we speak, vulgarly and meanly, of an old maid—and yet an old maid, worthy of the name, with all the strange experiences by proxy which life brings, yet with the first awe of imagination still undeparted, and the bloom never banished from her aged cheek, is one of the most delicate objects in nature. Perhaps, however, we must add, such a one is very inadequately qualified for the composition of tragedies, especially those that deal with the passions.

In the preface to her first volume, Joanna Baillie sets forth her theory of the extreme interest of "mankind to man," by way of accounting for the choice of her subjects. Her illustration of the manner in which that interest works is very bold and ingenious; we do not venture to assert that it was altogether original, but it has certainly been often repeated. Not only does she assert this to be "the proper study" of the enlightened mind, but she claims it as the origin even of those hideous curiosities, which move the multitude to the enjoyment of executions and murders, and, indeed, as in the following example, the excuse of absolute cruelty.

"Revenge, no doubt, first began among the savages of America that dreadful custom of sacrificing their prisoners of war. But the perpetration of such hideous cruelty could never have become a permanent national custom but for the universal desire in the human mind to behold man in every situation, putting forth his strength against the current of adversity, scorning all bodily anguish, or struggling with those feelings of nature which, like a beating stream, will ofttimes burst through the barriers of pride. Before they begin those terrible rites they treat their prisoners kindly; and it cannot be supposed that men, alternately enemies and friends to so many neighbouring tribes, in manners and appearance like themselves, should so strongly be actuated by a spirit of public revenge. This custom, therefore, must be considered as a grand and terrible game which every tribe plays against another; where they try, not the strength of the arm, the swiftness of the feet, nor the acuteness of the eye, but the fortitude of the soul. Considered in this light, the excess of cruelty exercised upon their miserable victim, in which every hand is described as ready to inflict its portion of pain, and every head ingenious in the contrivance of it, is no longer to be wondered at. To put into his measure of misery one agony less, would be doing a species of injustice to every hero of their own tribe who had already sustained it, and to those who might be called upon to do so—among whom each of these savage tormentors has his chance of being one, and has prepared himself for it from his childhood. Nay, it would be a species of injustice to the haughty victim himself, who would scorn to purchase his place among the heroes of his nation at an easier price than his undaunted predecessors."

By this startling yet fine example does the author declare her conviction that human character and action are of all things in the world the most interesting to men, a truth which scarcely requires so daring an illustration. It is on this ground that she chooses the action of the passions as her special theme. But the limitation of her powers, and the absence

of the broader genius which can conceive life as a whole, is apparent in her parcelling out of the great motives, generally so strangely intertwined, of human action; and a treatment so artificial deprives us of the very sympathy she claims, since, to see a man struggling, for instance, with the passion of hatred is a different thing from seeing him contend in "the grand and terrible game," as she finely calls it, where not strength of arm, nor swiftness of foot, nor keenness of eye, but the fortitude of the soul is concerned. This pedantic separation of one mental force from another turns the men of her tragedies into puppets so helpless in the grip of the formal passion, which is supposed to sway them, that we accompany their mock struggle with impatience rather than sympathy. The most popular of the tragedies, and the one which the author had the gratification of seeing performed by no less actors than John Kemble and Mrs. Siddons, the play of De Monfort, affords us at once an instance of this. It is, perhaps, the best of Joanna Baillie's tragedies; but there is no trace in it of "the grand and terrible game." From the moment when the hero presents himself to us he is not struggling against his master-passion, but nursing it in long soliloquies and musings, and seizing every opportunity to secure its ascendency over him. None of that wonderful play of suggestion with which Shakspeare leads us to the inevitable end is possible in so straightforward an exhibition. Nor is there any cause given, anything to justify the victim of passion or to call forth our sympathy. His enemy has done him no harm, his hatred is entirely with-

out reason, his wrath wordy and weak. Artifices of the simplest description suffice to drive him to madness, his revenge is cowardly, and his remorse womanish. He is introduced in gloomy self-absorption, impatient alike of kindness and service, brooding over his passion. "I loathed thee when a boy" is all the excuse he attempts to make for himself: and it is not only when his enemy crosses his path that the ecstasy of rage is on him. It possesses him continually as love does, but with even more constant force. It has

> "Driven me forth from kindred peace,
> From social pleasure, from my native home,
> To be a sullen wanderer upon earth,
> Avoiding all men, cursing and accursed."

The forced character of the hero's attitude is all the more evident from the fact that the object of this concentrated wrath has no special connection with the hater, and does not force himself upon him in any way, the only direct act of intercourse between them, of which we are informed, being that Rezenvelt has spared the life of De Monfort in an encounter of arms when he was at his enemy's mercy. Nor does Rezenvelt's demeanour, when he is introduced, revolt us as it ought to do, to keep us in sympathy with Monfort, for his light-heartedness is of an innocent kind, and his wit not pungent enough to hurt a fly. Jane, the sister of De Monfort, is a noble description, but she is not much more. The following passage, which is the preface to her appearance, has been often quoted; but it is almost the only one we care to give,

not only as an example of Joanna Baillie's power, but also of her weakness :—

Page. Madam, there is a lady in your hall,
Who begs to be admitted to your presence.
Lady. Is it not one of our invited friends?
Page. No, far unlike to them; it is a stranger.
Lady. How looks her countenance?
Page. So queenly, so commanding, and so noble,
I shrunk at first in awe; but when she smil'd,
For so she did to see me thus abash'd,
Methought I could have compass'd sea and land
To do her bidding.
Lady. Is she young or old?
Page. Neither, if right I guess; but she is fair:
For time hath laid his hand so gently on her,
As he too had been aw'd.
Lady. The foolish stripling!
She has bewitch'd thee. Is she large in stature?
Page. So stately and so graceful is her form,
I thought at first her stature was gigantic;
But on a near approach I found, in truth,
She scarcely does surpass the middle size.
Lady. What is her garb?
Page. I cannot well describe the fashion of it.
She is not deck'd in any gallant trim,
But seems to me clad in the usual weeds
Of high habitual state; for as she moves
Wide flows her robe in many a waving fold,
As I have seen unfurled banners play
With a soft breeze.
Lady. Thine eyes deceive thee, boy;
It is an apparition thou hast seen.
Freberg (starting from his seat). It is an apparition he has seen,
Or it is Jane De Monfort.

This is said to be a wonderfully good description

of Mrs. Siddons, and to see that great actress enter immediately after must have had a wonderful effect upon the audience; but once on the stage, except to receive the tedious and lengthened confidences of her brother, there is little or nothing for Jane de Monfort to do, and though everybody else continues to admire and praise her, she has no influence on the course of events, and is, in short, a mere dignified spectator from beginning to end. It is unnecessary to point out the prosaic line here and there in the poetry itself, which mars the effect even as a description. Besides the absence of any possible sympathy with the hero, the play is without incident or movement. Hatred holds the stage alone, unreasoning and extreme. The play of human life is all suspended, and the central figure has room for no sentiment, no idea, but one. In *Basil* the construction of the play is better, for it is not so entirely monotonous. Besides the love of the hero, there is the desire to conquer on the part of the heroine, mingled with a wavering beginning of affection: and the double intrigue of the Duke and his counsellors to detain the unlucky general and excite against him his mutinous soldiers, relieves the pressure of the one sole passion. It is unnecessary to enter into the whole series in detail. They are all marked with the same faults, and in none is the workmanship so fine as to dazzle the reader. Potent and great poetry will triumph over any fault of construction, but it is marvellous to contemplate the acres of respectable verse, in which an unnatural and formal pose of the soul can be kept up, scene after

scene and act after act, with rarely a gleam of nature shining through. The tragedy of *Ethwald* is a double one, two long plays to exemplify the well-worn dangers of ambition, which are only not so trite as they are bloody. But all these tragedies, without exception, are bloody. When there is not a hecatomb of slaughtered victims, the one invariable "corse" is pierced with a dozen wounds at least.

All this is in very strange contrast with the character and position of a woman so womanly and genuine: but stranger still is her sober certainty of the dignity and importance of her work. This conviction shone through every line of her elaborate prefaces, and enshrined her name and her dwelling in the quiet modesty of private life. For many years her house at Hampstead was an object of pilgrimage to many, and the best of the age resorted to it with a respect which was almost allegiance. Not that she they sought had any wealth of instruction or witchery of words to charm them withal, such as were possessed by the greater poet so near her on the other suburban hill at Highgate. It would be hard, indeed, to say what was and has been since the secret of Joanna Baillie's power; perhaps it was at bottom *that* profound and most modest, yet unwavering *faith in herself*, which is visible in all she says. A conviction so serious and so entirely unmingled with vanity, is very impressive, and her generation would seem, respectfully and devoutly, though not without here and there an occasional scepticism, to have taken her at her word. Jeffrey, in his early boldness, in one of the first numbers of the

Edinburgh, assailed her in his usual frank manner, being no respecter of persons. Some years after, when she and her sister were in Edinburgh, the dauntless critic, who evidently had so little malice in his assaults that he never considered them a reason for keeping aloof from the victims, sought her acquaintance; but, as her biographer says, "Joanna was inexorable." She would have nothing to say, in his own empire and capital, to the Rover-chief, the Arch-critic, as his townsfolk called him. No other author we know of was so stern or determined. Southey sneered in his sleeve, but did not refuse to meet his literary enemy—but Joanna was inexorable. At a later period, however, the poet forgave—and little Lord Jeffrey, in his visits to London, found his way as often as another to Hampstead, where Scott hastened whenever he had a chance, and many a visitor besides, whose visits were well worth remembering. Joanna was not eloquent in talk, nor in any way remarkable to a stranger: her sister Agnes, who was her constant companion, was the first of the two in society: but Sir Walter Scott declared that if he wanted to give an intelligent stranger the best idea possible of an English (he should have said Scots) gentlewoman, he would send him to Joanna Baillie, and it would be hard to find higher praise.

Her first publication was a little volume of *Fugitive Verses*, and this, a reprint of the juvenile collection, was also her last. She dedicated the last edition to Samuel Rogers, who had advised its republication, "a poet," she says, "who, from his own refined genius,

classical elegance, and high estimation with the public, is well qualified to judge," and to whom she was indebted for "very great and useful service" in criticism. But at the same time, with a half pathetic apology, through which there tingles an ironical note, Joanna explains that "Modern Poetry, within these last thirty years, has become so imaginative, impassioned, and sentimental, that more homely subjects in simple diction are held in comparatively small estimation." This was long after Wordsworth's defiance of fine words and high poetic language had resounded to all the winds; but contemporaries are oblivious of each other. And Joanna still stood upon the pre-Wordsworth ground, at a time when Byron and Shelley were raising new standards of poetic advancement. "When these poems were written," she adds, "of all our eminent poets of modern times not one was known. Mr. Hayley and Miss Seward, and a few other cultivated poetical writers, were the poets spoken of in literary circles. Burns, read and appreciated as he deserved by his own countrymen, was known to few readers south of the Tweed." What a revolution to have occurred in one woman's life! Joanna Baillie died in the serenest and most beautiful age so short a time ago as 1851, after a long, gentle, and tranquil life.

It might, perhaps, have been better to place the name of Mrs. Barbauld in our last chapter among the *bourgeois* circle already referred to; for she is frequently spoken of among them, sometimes with friendly comment, sometimes with the natural asperity

which a critic must expect to meet with: for she was a frequent contributor to the periodicals of the time, and a reviewer, the most ungracious of all offices. No such weight of reputation as that which Joanna Baillie has retained, through an almost complete ignorance on the part of the present generation of her works—has ever, so far as we can make out, belonged to Mrs. Barbauld: yet it is difficult to tell why, for she has left behind her at least one scrap of verse which is immortal, and much beside that is well worthy a place in the recollection of her country. She was, like so many of the writers we have had occasion to refer to, the child of a dissenting minister. The position seems to have been exceptionally favourable to literature. In the case of Mrs. Barbauld, a whole succession of dissenting ministers are involved, dating on one side from one of the Seceders of 1662, "the noble 2000," as Miss Aikin describes them, "who resigned their livings rather than violate conscience at the prompting of that treacherous bigot, Lord Clarendon." She was born in 1757, Anna Letitia Aikin, and her father's life was chiefly spent at the head of a theological academy for dissenting students, established at Warrington. Of the professors there, the famous Dr. Priestley was one, and Gilbert Wakefield, afterwards convicted after the pleasant fashion of the time for sedition, in consequence of a political pamphlet, another; so that it is evident the little community was of advanced views. Dr. Aikin was the theological tutor of his academy. He held some "obscure notions," according to Priestley, upon the

doctrine of the Atonement, but was an Arian like the rest. The Nonconformity of the time, at least in its most cultivated and intellectual circles, was everywhere strongly inclined to Unitarianism. They made a lively little community of their own, the distinct colour of the Nonconformist party of which it consisted giving an amusing and characteristic variety to the type. The Professor's daughter was a beautiful and sprightly girl, of a fine spirit, and full of activity and life. There is a story of her sudden escape, by climbing a tree, from the anxious suit of a rustic lover. The tree grew against the garden wall, and the alarmed young lady swung herself over into the lane beyond, leaving her suitor *planté là*. "He lived and died a bachelor," adds the record; "and though he was never known to purchase any other book whatever, the works of Mrs. Barbauld, splendidly bound, adorned his parlour to the end of his days." It might have been well for the girl if she had been content with this faithful farmer, and not gone farther and fared worse.

The man she married was a young Frenchman of a Huguenot family, whom his father, who had a post in the household of the Electors of Hesse, "destined for the English Church," we are told, though, by a somewhat ludicrous mistake, he sent his son, in preparation for the Anglican Establishment, to the Warrington Theological Academy, to the hands of the Priestleys and Wakefields. By this time Miss Aikin had already published a volume of poems, of which Dr. Priestley writes, with somewhat ponderous flattery, that one of his friends has read them not only "with

admiration, but astonishment," and requests from her a poem to be published for the benefit of Paoli and the brave Corsicans, which, he says, "may be the *coup de grâce* to the French troops in that island." This first essay in literature also procured for the young author a solemn letter from the great Mrs. Montagu, once the arbiter of fame, expressing the great pleasure she feels in "opening a more intimate correspondence with Miss Aikin." "You are certainly obliged," says the Queen of Society to the novice whom she compliments, "to every man who is not jealous, and to every woman who is not envious of your talents." The young lady thus distinguished was possessed of great beauty. "Her form was slender, her complexion exquisitely fair, with the bloom of perfect health; her features regular and elegant, and her dark blue eyes beamed with the light of wit and fancy." Perhaps amid all the professors who "drank tea together every Saturday," and whose "conversation was equally instructive and pleasing," the gay young Frenchman, Rochemont Barbauld, though he was somewhat flighty, and his "theatrical French manners" alarmed the Lancashire society, was a welcome relief. "Neither Oxford nor Cambridge could boast of brighter names in literature and science than several of those dissenting tutors," says Mrs. Barbauld's niece and biographer, Lucy Aikin, herself not without pretensions to fame. But even dons of the first water are found to go to the wall in honour of a foolish undergraduate, and the girl-poet was no wiser than her kind. When she was warned that her

lover had a predisposition to insanity, she answered bravely, "If I were now to disappoint him he would certainly go mad"—and held to her choice. The new-married pair went to live in the village of Palgrave, in Suffolk, where the husband became the minister of the little Salem of the place, and, in addition, set up a school. The success of the school was great, and Mrs. Barbauld "threw herself heart and soul into the work." She had to contend with her husband's occasional "fits of insane fury," and to keep the routine of the place undisturbed by this terrible risk. Studious little boys of cultivated families, such a person as William Taylor of Norwich, and that great Dr. Sayers whose claims to renown have so entirely died out of recollection, were among the pupils whom she introduced to the early ways of learning: and for them and her nephew and adopted child, Charles Aikin, she wrote the delightful *Early Lessons*, which is the most poetical and idyllic of all baby books. Never were words of one syllable so charmingly employed. The *Hymns in Prose*, perhaps as having a somewhat higher aim, have held their place longer. But hymns in prose are a mistake, and never will be so popular as verse with children; whereas the lovely little pictures of the *Early Lessons* are never out of date. They are, among the dull pages of ordinary lesson books, like vignettes by Stothard among the common illustrations of a penny journal.

The Barbaulds went often to London in their holidays and saw congenial people, and got free of the toils of their life; and after about ten years of school

work they left their country academy and settled in Hampstead for some time. Here Mrs. Barbauld made the discovery that De Monfort, a tragedy which it had given her great pleasure to see, and which had been recently published in a volume called *Plays on the Passions*, was written by "a young lady of Hampstead whom I visited, and who came to Mr. Barbauld's chapel, all the while with as innocent a face as if she had never written a line." It was no small glory, it may be well supposed, for that young lady (not quite so young perhaps as friendship describes her) to have her fine verses mouthed by Mrs. Siddons and Kemble. Mrs. Barbauld has never had any such rank as the visionary unjustifiable rank of the modest and gentle Joanna. She was but a writer of little poems, of children's lesson-books, of reviews, and magazine articles, beside the lofty pretensions of the dramatist. Yet she had always warm admirers. Hannah More writes to her about her "incomparable poem" addressed to Mr. Wilberforce, on an incident in the agitation for the abolition of slavery. Young Mr. Crabb Robinson being asked by a young lady if he would like to know Mrs. Barbauld, answered with enthusiasm, "You might as well ask me if I would like to know the angel Gabriel,"—and such authorities as Dr. Johnson and Charles James Fox regretted the waste of her great talents in the composition of children's books. On the other hand, Lamb, whom she reviewed with considerable severity, launched keen little stammering gibes at her, and spoke of her and Mrs. Inchbald as the Bald women.

It was while she was living in Hampstead that her brother, Dr. Aikin, between whom and herself the warmest affection always existed, produced the *Evenings at Home*, which for a long time was one of the most popular of instructive books, read aloud on winter evenings in thousands of families, and forming the minds of many gentle unlearned people. In this book Mrs. Barbauld had some share. And it was about this time (in 1793 or '94) that she was in Edinburgh, and gave, as Sir Walter has said, the first distinct touch to his dormant genius by making known the translation of "Lenore," made by her old pupil and young friend William Taylor, whose sobriquet "of Norwich" is somewhat tedious, but reads like a title. All this time she was living a life of the keenest agitation and distress, watching over her unfortunate husband, whose mad paroxysms got more and more alarming, but from whom she would not be separated as long as it was possible to keep him at home. In the beginning of the new century they removed to Stoke Newington, where her brother had gone to live, and bought a house close to Dr. Aikin's, whose presence was a support to the unhappy wife in her terrible watch and charge. Here she lived, sometimes in danger of her life, screening and shielding her unfortunate husband at once from public knowledge of his state, and from the horrors of restraint. It was here that Crabb Robinson saw her and put down his impressions with his usual graphic neatness of touch. "Mrs. Barbauld bore the remains of great personal beauty," he says. "She

had a brilliant complexion, light hair, blue eyes, a small elegant figure, and her manners were very agreeable, with something of the generation then departing." A short time after her husband's malady broke out into wild madness; he pursued her with a knife to kill her, and she was compelled to take refuge in her brother's house. After this, the devoted woman was compelled to yield, and he was put under restraint; but shortly after released himself and her by suicide. She lived more than a dozen years after this, dying a very old woman, over eighty. Among her productions were some political essays, as well as many on literary subjects, all lost in the indiscriminate mass of anonymous periodical writing, to which most known authors have contributed more or less. Her poem on the year 1811, written at a melancholy moment of the national history, and when she herself had little cheerfulness to spare, contains the original of that famous New Zealander of Lord Macaulay's, with whom we are now all so familiar. It was an "ingenuous youth" from "the Blue Mountains, or Ontario's Lake," whom she imagined, coming on pilgrimage to see "London's faded glories."

> "Pensive and thoughtful shall the wanderers greet
> Each splendid square and still, untrodden street;
> Or of some crumbling turret mined by time,
> The broken stairs with perilous steps shall climb:
> Then stretch their view the wide horizon round,
> By scattered hamlets trace its ancient bound,
> And choked no more with fleets, fair Thames's sway
> Through reeds and sedge pursue his idle way."

This, in those days when prosecutions for sedition

were easy, was considered unpatriotic. "There was a disheartening and even gloomy tone" in it, which "I," says Crabb Robinson, "even with all my love for her, could not quite excuse." It was met by a "coarse review in the *Quarterly*" which gave Mrs. Barbauld great pain, and of which Miss Edgeworth wrote to her in warm indignation, but droll phraseology, condemning "the odious tone in which they dare to speak of the most respectable and elegant female writer of whom England can boast." Mrs. Barbauld, however, was more than respectable and elegant. She is one of the most attractive figures of her age. Her little *Lessons* will commend themselves to everybody who loves childhood—and she is one of the writers, who, apart from all other claims upon our recollection, has won a tender immortality by one stanza of exquisite and genuine feeling such as finds an echo in most human breasts. It is best that the reader who probably knows this should have it in the setting given it by Crabb Robinson, and hear what great voice it was that confirmed its title to the skies.

"It was after her death that Lucy Aikin published Mrs. Barbauld's collected works, of which I gave a copy to Miss Wordsworth. Among the poems is a stanza to Life, written in extreme old age. It was long after I gave these works to Miss Wordsworth that her brother said, 'Repeat me that stanza by Mrs. Barbauld.' I did so. He made me repeat it again. And so he learnt it by heart. He was at the time walking in his sitting-room at Rydal, with his hands behind him; and I heard him mutter to himself, 'I am not in the habit of grudging people their good things, but I wish I had written those lines—

'Life! we've been long together,
Through pleasant and through cloudy weather;
'Tis hard to part when friends are dear,
Perhaps 'twill cost a sigh, a tear,
Then steal away, give little warning,
Choose thine own time;
Say not good night, but in some happier clime
Bid me good morning.'"—

Mrs. Barbauld's family was full of literature—but as so often happens when one of an attached kindred attains eminence, the work of the rest is of a nature to encourage the suspicion that it never would have come into being but for the existence of one person of genius among a number of intelligent followers. Miss Lucy Aikin, her niece, wrote her biography, with an old-fashioned formality which must have been antiquated in her own day, but which now is pleasant like Chippendale furniture and blue china—and was besides the author of various historical compilations. This lady's brothers produced some scientific work, carrying out, as the family biographer says, the family vocation. Thus, as in so many cases, the clear little stream of genius dwindled and lost itself among the sands.

Of the same class of cultivated and intellectual minds, stamped with the peculiar individuality given by the air of the provinces and the atmosphere of Dissent, was William Roscoe, one of the earliest of those commercial magnates whose taste and love of art have given them a distinct place in the world of literature. It is a combination which always has been popular. Great wealth makes great expenditure not only lawful but laudable—and for a man without

estates to keep up, or natural dependants to provide for, there is something very seductive in the power of accumulating beautiful things about him, and making the symbols of his money more splendid and graceful than even the stately houses and historical surroundings of the longer-established aristocracy. The inclination which turns the mind of such a man to the glories of the Renaissance, and the citizen-princes who cultivated the genius and enjoyed the luxuries of that impure and cruel, but glorious and gifted age—is a very natural one: and nowhere better could the biographer of Lorenzo the Magnificent be found than in a merchant of Liverpool, then rising into wealth and importance such as all the wealth of the Italian cities could vainly have attempted to rival, yet entirely destitute of that kind of endowment which has made them immortal. The Roscoes —for this refined and intellectual citizen was the father of a family of sons, all intellectual and highly cultivated as became their parentage, and all authors —which perhaps was more than was necessary—were the centre of a lively and clever society in Liverpool, better known than they probably would have been had they been in London itself, and coming into contact as the notabilities of their town with everybody notable that passed that way. We have almost forgotten nowadays how excellent a point of vantage this local reputation is, and how much it enhances the reputation of a writer, who, under the present laws would probably be swallowed up amid the literary circles of London, and fail altogether for want of the

pedestal which a big admiring provincial town could give him. Roscoe was a pupil of Mrs. Barbauld in his early years, like the often-quoted William Taylor of Norwich. Both of these men kept a certain nucleus of literary life in their different regions, and derived a sense of greatness and superiority from their position, the pomp of which is sometimes amusing: but no doubt it was a good thing that they were there, leavening the rude energy of a great mercantile community on one hand, and quickening the dulness of provincial life on the other. They were all Dissenters — the Roscoes, the Aikins, the Taylors, and many more — inclining towards Unitarianism, if not going farther in the way of "free thought,"—all come of respectable well-to-do families, known to their fellow-townsmen, and thus as good as a certificate in favour of literature, showing that it was not a vagabond profession, as so many good people thought.

Of a very different class, though still Dissenters, and still provincial, were the great preacher Robert Hall, and the severe essayist John Foster. The former we must leave for another chapter. But Foster is a distinct variety among the professors of literature. He is the impersonation of a somewhat gloomy Dissenter, shut up by circumstances in a small circle, sitting among his little group of intellectual persons with a heartfelt sense of aggrieved superiority, and contemplating most things in heaven and earth as subjects to be discussed by letter or by word of mouth. His essays had, at one time, a wide reputa-

tion, and they have always been of the kind of literature appreciated by persons of thoughtful minds without much education, to whom the gravity of steady intellectual investigations, not of too scientific an order, is new and delightful. An essay *On Decision of Character* does not seem likely to be very original, but yet there is the originality of a mind not too much cultivated or too much pervaded by other men's thinkings in the conscientious examination of his subject, which Foster gives. He speaks, in one of his letters, of "my total want of all knowledge of intellectual philosophy and of all metaphysical reading," which is not a promising beginning for a thinker; but he adds—a consideration which atones for his ignorance, that "whatever of this kind appears . . . is from my own observation and reflection much more than from any other resource." This, though sadly unsatisfactory to the student, is precisely the kind of semi-philosophical thinking which pleases those "thoughtful" readers who are, if we may use the expression, of the middle class in mind as usually in circumstances; and who feel themselves superior to the easy level of mere light literature without being sufficiently educated or capable of severe mental exertion to appreciate scientific philosophy.

In the many excellent households ambitious of both the reputation and the reality of thoughtfulness, and loving to believe that theirs was no flippant talk about objects of no particular interest, but lofty conversation, in which no wandering Raphael—did such a visitant ever appear unawares—need have felt him-

self out of place, Foster was a congenial teacher. Every idea that presented itself to his mind did so as an object for exposition or discussion. There is a curious confession of weakness made by him in his old age, which shows how entirely this had been the habit of his life. He describes himself as unable any longer to "*work a conversation*," and therefore avoiding visitors. "In my present state of debility," he says (in a letter concerning the arrival of a colleague), "I feel an absolute horror of the necessity of long laborious *talks*, such as would be inevitable to a constant association with a man like him, a thorough college man, hard disciplined, doggedly literary and nearly a stranger. With *you* the case is quite different —we are old acquaintances; there is no obligation of ceremony; we can talk about what we like; read Walter Scott; be under no necessity of mental exertion, but just as far as we find it agreeable . . . anything more formal, more laborious, and more continued than this, miserably jades me. *It would be as bad as having to preach every day.*"

This alarmed avoidance of the kind of conversation which was too familiar to him, gives a sort of whimsical picture of what he had been. His essays, and even his familiar letters, all convey the same impression. One can imagine the little narrow circle sitting round, all with ears on the alert for every new opening for thought, "working the conversation" with conscientious zeal, losing no opportunity of self-improvement. An essay-writer is always more or less exposed to the suspicion of writing for

writing's sake, whether he has or has not anything to say; and Foster had none of the qualifications of fine and flowing style, of gracious and graceful imagination, which sometimes make the mere charm of the execution a very sufficient reason for literary work. He besieged his subject with all the science he knew, and the most conscientious intention, as he drove it from line to line of its fortifications, of doing real service to humanity by forcing it to disclose itself; and the process was eminently satisfactory to a large audience of the like-minded, fond of thought that could be thus followed, that was not too deep for them, and that looked so much more profound than it was. "I like my mind," he says, "for its *necessity* of seeking the abstraction of every subject; but, at the same time, this is, without more knowledge and discipline, extremely inconvenient, and sometimes the work is done very awkwardly or erroneously. How little the reader can do justice to the labours of an author unless himself also were an author!" Bacon himself had no such elevated idea of the difficulties of his work.

We require to call up before us the dissenting community of the period, with its strong underlying sense, not only that it was the salt of the earth, but that its bounden duty was to prove itself so, amid the levities and flippancies of ordinary society, even in its domestic privacy—by "working the conversation," and keeping up a pervasive intellectualism as well as piety—in order to understand such men and their productions. For one of the strangest things

in the revelation, when such a man as Foster rises high enough to be visible against the firmament, is the sudden surging out of chaos along with him, hanging to his skirts, of numbers of nameless persons, each with a little glimmer of reputation of his own, author of a book, an essay, at the least a volume of sermons, which makes him think himself, and induces his friends to believe that he is, a member of the literary republic. These swarm about Foster, Reverends this and that, men whom he considers of genius, born lights of the dim provincial sphere. And it is very surprising to see how intellectual those excellent people were, how literature ran in families, and how scarcely a chapel existed in all the towns and villages of the Midland Counties without some little light of the kind, some maker of gentle verse, or writer of moral essays, on *Maternal Solicitude*, on *Rival Pleasures*, a thousand little subjects on which well-turned formal sentences could be put together, and well-worn but modest and virtuous thoughts be expressed. The reader may be permitted to wonder whether anything of the same high, if narrow level, remains nowadays in the simple homes where poor Independent ministers vegetate, sadly subject, as we have learnt to think them, to vulgar deacons and green-grocers—where there is one small maid-of-all-work for all attendance, but the highest subjects are discussed in the little parlour, and father and mother alike, or at least, one of the young ladies, retire from time to time to compile the careful manuscript. Such a household at Lewisham in Suffolk, and afterwards at Ongar,

was the family of the Taylors, the father of which was an engraver as well as a pastor, the mother the author of one or two moral tales, the daughters Jane and Ann writers of a little more note, and the son the well-known Isaac Taylor, the author of many philosophical works in the same vein as those of Foster, though much more voluminous and wordy. His *History of Enthusiasm* is one of the best known and most popular of many works, and may be considered in some sense the parent of a great deal of recent literature, in which a gentle egotism and an inclination to mix up the mild records of personal experience with more legitimate commentaries upon books and life, and keep a virtuous and amiable "I" always in the front, whatever may be the subject treated—have originated a popular literary method. This domestic eloquence and tea-table sublimity bring the art of "thoughtful writing" down to the capacity of the simplest audience, and make the reader proud of himself as well as delighted with his intellectual guide. But the sisters belong entirely to the gentle refinement of that obscure world above which Isaac Taylor hovers in the more ambitious position of a great writer and thinker. They both wrote verses, *Original Poems for Infant Minds,* and several other collections, in one of which occur the little verses which are in their way immortal, though the reader will smile at the description — the "Twinkle, twinkle, little star," which we have all learned in our day and taught to our children. Jane Taylor was the more gifted of the two sisters, and there are some of her

prose sketches which are worth remembering. "How it strikes a Stranger," a little epilogue in which the supposed impression made upon the mind of an angel whose curiosity has tempted him, even at the cost of sharing their mortality, to descend among men, is the theme, recurs to our mind from the recollections of youth with considerable force.

A writer of more note and power, connected with a similar community though scarcely proceeding from the same caste of prophets, was James Montgomery, who, at the beginning of the nineteenth century, was the editor of the *Sheffield Iris*, and already known as a poet of the highest moral tone. He was the son of a Moravian missionary, but had broken forth from that quaint society in the energy of his youth, though he returned to his allegiance in after days. Though it is difficult to think of him now but as the gentlest and mildest of religious poets, he was one of those who came in contact with the capricious and irritable power of the State in the agitating years of the French Revolution. A poem which he printed on the demolition of the Bastille, though not written by himself, was interpreted to be a seditious libel, and he was fined and imprisoned for it. A similar offence brought him again into York Castle some time later; but such accidents brought distinction rather than disgrace in those troubled times. He published various long poems which have faded from recollection—"The World before the Flood," "The Pelican Island," and many others, but it is by the occasional verses still to be found in collections of pious poems,

and in some cases, we think, even used as hymns, which keep him in remembrance—such poems as that on "Prayer," which express the pseudo-thought and real devotion of the vast underground audience (if we may so call it) to whom poetry is only poetry when it puts into words something they want and understand — or veils their want of understanding for them with melodious words, which perhaps is still better. These verses give us no additional insight into the character of prayer. To have it described as

> "The motion of a hidden fire
> That trembles in the breast,"

the "burden of a sigh, the falling of a tear," does not, we are obliged to say, convey any clearer conception. But the way of saying it has proved delightful to many a gentle reader, very well and devoutly conscious of that profound operation of the soul, though no more able to explain it than the poet. The religious poetry which pleases the multitude—and nothing does so please the multitude as religious poetry—is all more or less of this class.

To turn from those pious circles so full of all the paraphernalia of thinking, its symbols and surroundings, to a life so full of the excess of practical energy as that of William Cobbett, is a leap indeed. Nothing could be more unlike the calm and regulated existence, with more books and ideas than life and action in it, of the ministers' houses, than the story of the restless and eager peasant lad, who "did not remember the time when I did not earn my own living,"

and who stormed through every phase of life with an energy and self-will, and independent pride in his own exertions, which is amusingly tempered by much mental adroitness and a great deal of the moral confusion of a mind intensely bent upon its own advancement. His account of his early days reminds us, in a small degree, of the more tender picture left us by Burns and his brother Gilbert, of the corresponding cottage in Ayrshire, where, at about the same period, these Scotch ploughboys were being trained by the patriarch father whose noble and serious character gave dignity to his race. The breeding of the two families seems to have been somewhat similar. "We were all of us strong and laborious; and my father used to boast that he had four boys, the eldest of whom was but fifteen, who did as much work as any three men in the parish of Farnham." And though Cobbett seems to have made his first step in the thorny ways of letters in a dame's school, it was this father, who, "in the winter evenings learnt us all to read and write, and gave us a pretty tolerable knowledge of arithmetic. Grammar he did not properly understand himself, and, therefore, his endeavour to teach us that necessarily failed." One wonders if there are many hard-working labourers or even small farmers in these regions now who can teach reading and writing and a tolerable knowledge of arithmetic, even without grammar, to their boys in the winter evenings; and if so, whether the Board schools are so great an improvement as we suppose?

They knew nothing of politics, these hardworking

rustic folk. No newspaper was ever seen in the cottage in the dimness of the eighteenth century. When there was a victory they huzzaed, without well knowing why: and yet "my father was a partisan of the Americans" in the war which startled the country and the century as nothing had done before. It was the first enlightening principle which woke the old tranquillity of indifference; "he would not have suffered his best friend to drink success to the king's arms at his table." Cobbett, who went through several changes of opinion afterwards, came to think this "a mistaken prejudice" on his father's part; but it is very curious to find so much independent opinion at such a period and on so low a level of society. From this humble but worthy home the boy ran off at sixteen, moved by the spirit of adventure and desire to see the world. After a time spent in London in an attorney's office, where, among other valuable discoveries, he found out that he could not spell, he enlisted, and as there was no war going on at the moment, and a great deal of leisure afforded to the young recruit, he set to work to educate himself. It is a curious proof of the difference between a youth sprung from the uneducated classes, and one who is in the habit of hearing moderately correct English from his cradle, that Cobbett's first literary study was a Grammar which he "studied with unremitting attention," writing out the entire book two or three times, and getting it by heart. By this means he taught himself to write "without falling into very gross errors." The racy English he afterwards

wrote and poured in such floods upon the world was then unthought of, and all that he cared for was to be able to copy General Debeig's correspondence. He became a smart and efficient soldier, sergeant-major in his regiment, popular with everybody, and obtained his discharge after eight years service with "thanks for his behaviour and conduct." After this he married a girl whom he had seen at work eight years before at daybreak on a winter's morning, "out in the snow scouring out a wash tub." "That's the girl for me," the young soldier had said to himself. His choice seems to have been the turning point of his life. Had she not been faithful to him, he would have married another lady with whom he met in the meantime, and settled as a farmer, and lost all the grandeur of his after career. "My rare conduct and great natural talents would then have failed of the success that afterwards attended them," he says, so that honesty in love proved the best policy for the future journalist and Member of Parliament. His wife, if not of the same talents, was as magnanimous as himself. He had met her in Nova Scotia, and when the regiment to which her father belonged was ordered back to Woolwich, it occurred to Cobbett that his Mary might not find herself happy in a soldier's crowded quarters: upon which ground he confided to his betrothed his entire savings, a hundred and fifty guineas, that she might keep herself comfortably until he could follow and marry her. When he returned to England, however, he found her a maid-of-all-work with five

pounds a year, and the first thing she did was to put back into his hands his hundred and fifty guineas untouched. No doubt this was the girl for the future demagogue.

After his marriage he went to America, where, with characteristic pugnacity, the young Englishman, then a determined king's man and Tory, with all the uncompromising partisanship which becomes a soldier, flung himself at the head of the new-formed nation in a series of warm animadversions upon their conduct and politics. His first production was an assault upon Dr. Priestley, then newly arrived in America in all the odour of political martyrdom, a sufferer for his opinions. "His landing was nothing to me," Cobbett says; "but the fulsome and consequential addresses sent him by pretended patriots, at once calculated to flatter the people here, and to degrade his country and *mine*, was something to me,"—and he flew into print with a pamphlet intended to be called "The Tartuffe detected," but which was published with the milder title of *Observations on the Emigration of a Martyr to the cause of Liberty.* After this he produced various fiery tracts of a similar description,—*A Bone to Gnaw for the Democrats, A Kick for a Bite*, etc. etc., signed by Peter Porcupine—pamphlets so keen in racy abuse and national spirit that the author made an immediate reputation, notwithstanding the dislike of the American people to criticism. These compositions were interrupted by the discovery that his publisher had taken the liberty to "promise a continuation, and that it should be made very interesting:" which

Cobbett took for an engagement that he, *he* the champion Englishman, should do what a bookseller told him, and write to please his customers!—"No," he shrieks, "if all his customers, if all the Congress, with the President at the head, had come and solicited me—nay, had my life depended upon a compliance, I would not have written another line!" He then turned publisher himself, to spite the man who had thus insulted him, opening a shop "as being at once a means of getting money and of propagating writings against the French." It was thought a dangerous step by his friends, who entreated him at least to put no "aristocratical portraits" in his windows; but this advice was enough to set the dare-devil in a blaze. The question was, whether "to set all danger at defiance, or live in everlasting subjection to the prejudices and caprices of the democratical mob." Needless to say which course of action commended itself to Cobbett. He filled his windows with portraits of kings, queens, princes and nobles, George the Third in the place of honour. "I had all the English ministers, several of the bishops and judges, the most famous admirals, and, in short, every picture that I thought likely to excite rage in the enemies of Great Britain."

Upon this a hand-to-hand fight ensued between the insulted Commonwealth and its officials on the one side, and William Cobbett, *alias* Peter Porcupine, late sergeant-major in His Majesty's forces, on the other. The dauntless "foreigner" was beaten eventually as a matter of course, but not before he had made the very air resound with wild blows right

and left, at the country, the Government, and private individuals, it did not matter whom. When he evacuated the field of battle at last, it was with colours flying and pride unabated. The encounter is amusing and characteristic, and would be as humorous an outburst of foolhardy daring as ever offended common sense and delighted national sentiment, had not the bold monarchist, the national champion, turned round to the other side as soon as he found himself in the regions where it was orthodox to be loyal. It is curious to know that the *Weekly Register* was begun with the pure principles of Conservatism, and that in Cobbett's first prosecution for libel, all kinds of eminent Tory personages bore witness to his character as "a strong defender of the king and constitution," "a zealous supporter of the monarchy." In a few years after his return to England he had turned entirely to the other side, reversing the operation of time and self-interest on so many of his contemporaries, whose change from youthful republicanism to soberer views was explained by the maturing of their minds, as well as in some cases by the opening up of their worldly prospects. Cobbett, for his part, seemed incapable of holding any opinion after it was fully proved to him that it was the opinion of the reigning class, and that honour and advancement in the ordinary meaning of the words lay that way. To snatch popularity and profit from the expression of sentiments which were all but rebellious, and to keep his standing in the very teeth of superior power, was his dearest ambition.

He was in and out of prison at intervals during the next dozen years, sometimes for "seditious libels" —sometimes for audacious comments upon the action of Government. His longest term of imprisonment was in consequence of his animadversions upon the flogging of men in a militia regiment, a freedom which cost him a thousand pounds and two years in Newgate. Some time later he was obliged to flee to America a second time to escape the action of a new law which was passed in Parliament, with a special view to the punishment of such offences—but neither imprisonment nor exile prevented the appearance of the *Weekly Register*, which he went on launching at the head of all in power, reducing its price at one time, and calling his thunderbolts "Two-penny Trash," in order to reach a wider audience. He came back from America in a calmer condition of affairs after the Peninsular War was over, when the State, less alarmed by the internal heavings of the popular volcano, had abolished the law aimed against him and his rebellious brethren of the press—but the return of the once devoted champion of kingly rights was now considered, in some places, dangerous to the national peace. The authorities of Manchester forbade his entrance into their town, and published placards, warning all well-disposed citizens to stay indoors, in case he should force his way into their streets. This born revolutionary had by that time changed all his principles, and was not only republican, but free-thinking, bringing with him, as sacred relics, from America, the bones of Tom Paine, a name which made

the hair stand erect on the head of British virtue. A great part of the wild prejudice against him was doubtless due to the mad brag of sedition, irreligion, and disloyalty thus made, and the association with his own of a name of such bad repute. Never was there such a squalid version of an apotheosis; and Cobbett soon discovered that even to the most advanced free-thinkers and the wildest revolutionary, the martyr of his ignorant and hot-headed fancy was an unsavoury saint.

It would be vain, however, to attempt to follow the entire course of this extraordinary egotist and braggart. He was throughout all his life a consistent type of a stubborn English clown, his mind entirely untouched by any ameliorating influences from the grammar which had formed his education, and quite incapable of perceiving the relations of affairs, or taking anything but the most positive and practical view of things around him. Thus he never actually changed his mind at all through all the apparent divergences of his opinion. His principle was opposition to the powers that be, in violent reaction from that submission to the same powers which he was born to. His supposed education so laboriously and conscientiously acquired, the "rare conduct and great natural talents" of which he was so sincerely conscious, added to a natural delight in fighting, and intense sense of his own superior wisdom, all tended to produce this reaction. He was the Hampden of the fields, not mute nor inglorious, mixing up the shrewdest natural wit with the most impenetrable obtusity, seeing

vividly in one small circle, but outside it not at all, and bringing the spirit of fierce village quarrels, and personal feuds, with all the unbounded power of vituperation which belongs to them, the sudden offence, the spite and fiery intolerance of the uneducated, into public affairs: a strange evidence of how the absence of the atmosphere of education tells upon those who have emancipated themselves from actual ignorance. But this very positivism and personal consistency of opposition had a force upon the multitude which reason and moderation seldom possess—and Cobbett was on the whole, notwithstanding all his misfortunes, a prosperous man. He got into Parliament before he died, and, sobered by that responsibility, conducted himself there with greater moderation than at any other period of his life.

But, on the other hand, Cobbett was master of the most excellent and vigorous English, simple, nervous, and to the point. Even his long expositions of past quarrels, and spiteful, personal attacks upon men dead and forgotten, have a certain interest, so living is the narrative, full of hot impulse and feeling, and boundless graphic detail. And in the foreground of everything he writes, the centre of all, is always that lively, amusing, hot-headed, wrong-headed self, a being inaccessible to reason, swayed by sudden impulses, by rapid mistaken impressions, by side gleams of confused reflection and distorted perspective so far as concerned the great public affairs into which he rashly threw himself without training for the work or understanding of

its real bearings. But when we turn to the other side of his character, and find him in scenes which he thoroughly understands, in the fresh rural landscapes, and humble thrifty houses, and village economics among which he was bred, he is a very different person. Occasionally we come to a bit of fine observation of nature which would not have misbecome White of Selborne: and his pictures of home-scenery are often as touching and real in English sweetness and homely subdued beauty as if they had come from the hands of Gainsborough or Constable. In this branch of art he has no violent effects, no tempest or passion, but the soft veiled skies, the hazy distance, the cheerful homesteads of a purely English landscape, with the birds singing all about, the larks in the grass, the swallows under the eaves. And here his constitutional brag, and sense that what *he* does must always be admirable, cannot take away the excellent good sense of his advice, or the inspiring spirit of domestic love, honesty, and truth, which is his principle of education. He was himself far too busy, too perpetually occupied, too wrong-headed, to learn anything out of the larger lessons of life in his own person: but his system of training, as he expounds it, is far more liberal, more noble and generous, than anything else in him, and his love and appreciation of the country and domestic life are always fine. It was to be sure the picture of an individual house among productive gardens and blossomed trees, where his word was absolute, and himself regarded as the first of mankind, which

was Cobbett's symbol of rural life. But in that home he was no doubt worthy of the love and sway he demanded. Here is a little vignette, taken at random, which is not a bad instance of his power. He has been describing with all the self-sufficiency of a man who has travelled and seen the world, and who has made his way, and has everything handsome about him, the impression of smallness and insignificance made upon his mind by the scenery of his native village when he returns to it—till nature suddenly seizes him, and reveals, notwithstanding all his pride and good-fortune, the heart still beating in his well-to-do breast.

"Everything was become so pitifully small: I had to cross in my postchaise the long and dreary heath of Bagshot, then, at the end of it, to mount a hill called Hungry Hill; and from that hill I knew I should look down into the beautiful and fertile vale of Farnham. My heart fluttered with impatience mixed with a sort of fear to see all the scenes of my childhood. There is a hill not far from the town called Crooksbury Hill, which rises up out of a flat in the form of a cone, and is planted with Scotch fir-trees. This hill was a famous object in the neighbourhood. It served as the superlative degree of height. . . . Therefore, the first object that my eyes sought was this hill. I could not believe my eyes—literally speaking, I for a moment thought the famous hill removed, and a little heap put in its stead; for I had seen in New Brunswick a single rock, or hill of solid rock, ten times as big, and four or five times as high. The postboy going down hill, and not a bad road, whisked me in a few minutes to the Bush Inn, from the garden of which I could see the prodigious sandhill where I had begun my gardening works. What a nothing! But now came rushing into my mind all at once my pretty little garden, my little blue smock frock, my little nailed shoes, my pretty pigeons that I used to feed out

of my hands, the last kind words and tears of my gentle and tender-hearted and affectionate mother! I hastened back into the room. If I had looked a moment longer I should have dropped"——.

And if we added another line the sentiment would drop down ten fathoms deep into bathos and vanity: for this strange mixture of a man, with the tears still in his eyes, immediately looks down upon his clothes to reflect, what a change! and remembering that he had dined the day before in company with Mr. Pitt, and been waited upon by men in gaudy liveries, he puffs out his chest, and swells his feathers with the habitual brag. "I had nobody to assist me in the world, no teachers of any sort; nobody to shelter me from the consequences of bad, and no one to counsel me to good behaviour. I felt proud"—— Thus was formed one of the most notable demagogues of his time. All his warm energy and passion have not been sufficient to keep him from oblivion, but yet there are many pages in his works that the world should not willingly let die.

While so many humble persons were having their say in the literature of their times, two of the richest men of the day also came upon the stage, with a whimsical variation in the tone. They have each retained the name of the productions that gave them fame. We still speak of "Anastasius" Hope, and recognise the other as Beckford of Vathek more easily than if we called him Beckford of Fonthill, though it is true that neither the names of the books nor those of the men produce now a very lively impression

on the present generation. Curiously enough, both of these millionaire writers were men whose wealth forms one of the chief features of their character, persons of magnificent tastes, living like princes, or rather like those eastern potentates, whose houses and habits are too gorgeous for anything but an Oriental legend or fairy tale. Beckford was the son of one of the wealthiest of Englishmen, the representative of a rich West Indian family — Jamaica being in those days a golden island, as rich as it is now poor — upon whom money poured from all sides, and who was like Whittington, twice, if not three times, Lord Mayor of London. Never was a young prince more surrounded by worship and observance than the young heir to "one of the first fortunes in the kingdom," whose wealth was increased by the savings of a long minority, and who, when he came into possession of his fortune, seemed, to the dazzled imaginations of all around, to have the whole world before him. His youth was spent in wandering over the earth in all the most beautiful scenes, and with all the advantages of a wealthy Englishman — tutor, physician, and a suite of servants accompanying the young man in his wanderings. This luxurious training and abstraction from all the rougher encounters of schoolboy life, which now would be thought doubly necessary as ballast to so much wealth, helped to confirm young Beckford in those weaknesses of character which made him in after years a luxurious recluse, something between a hermit and a Sultan, a shy and proud man accustomed to follow his own caprices, and to live sur-

rounded by parasites and flatterers, intolerant of the equality of ordinary society, and that operation of "finding your level," which it is the highest mission of fashion nowadays to carry out.

Very early in life, in his twenty-second year, Beckford wrote *Vathek*—with characteristic caprice in French; and it was not till some years later that an English translation saw the light. Thus, bizarre in this point as in others, his work appeared in his native language only at second hand, an English audience, or indeed any audience at all, being apparently indifferent to the young potentate whose pleasure it was to compose a story for his own entertainment. He had always been disposed to study the Oriental languages and literature; and gave up Latin and Greek, as soon as he was his own master, for Persian and Arabic. The story of Vathek is a wild parable of crime and punishment, with gleams of modern humour quaintly incongruous with the form of the Eastern apologue. Thus we are told that the hero, "ninth Caliph of the race of the Abbassides, and grandson of Haroun-al-Raschid," had an agreeable and majestic countenance—but when he was angry, one of his eyes became so terrible, that nobody dared look at him; the unfortunate person upon whom his gaze was fixed immediately fell back, and sometimes died on the instant. "For which cause, in fear of depopulating his states, and making his palace a desert, this prince permitted himself to be angry very rarely." His palace, which is full of unimaginable pleasures and delights, is described with all the unction of a builder

of palaces; and around the prince, who is himself a mildly pitiless despot, unconscious that there can be any will in the world but his own, is a group of vaguely yet cleverly indicated figures—his mother, Carathis, who is a Greek, curious in every kind of forbidden learning and grotesque diablerie, his fussy Vizier, envious and servile, and a comic eunuch, fat and important, whose life is made a burden to him by the caprices of the ladies under his care.

Vathek himself, having everything that he can desire, is naturally weary, and longing for a little more. He is visited after some time by a hideous Indian pedlar who brings wonderful wares, but will not speak to him, and cannot be slain even by the terrors of his eye, and who escapes from the prison where he has been placed, leaving behind some mysterious sabres with inscriptions, which, being with difficulty deciphered, tantalise the prince with descriptions of the country in which they were made, which is worthy of the greatest prince in the world. When a long delay has wrought the Caliph to the verge of madness, this hideous Giaour reappears, and after some ludicrous preliminaries, offers to Vathek riches and glory, to which his present state is as nothing, on condition of his renouncing the faith of Mahomet. To this the prince agrees with much ease, cementing his compact by treating his new and grim ally to the blood of fifty children — a regale upon which the Indian insists. To procure this a great feast to the children of the city is proclaimed: and Vathek, selecting fifty of the noblest, leads them

out with games and rejoicing, something as the Pied Piper of Hamelin did in after days, till they reach the edge of a pit, into which he flings them one by one with great cheerfulness. This naturally leads to a trifling disturbance in the city, caused by the unreasonable fathers and mothers; but, notwithstanding, Vathek sets out with great pomp on the journey prescribed to him by the Giaour: on which, however, he is stopped by a romantic adventure, falling in love with the daughter of an Emir who offers him hospitality on the way. When he has possessed himself of this lovely lady, Nouronibas by name, at the cost of her father's life, and by breaking all the laws of hospitality, offences of which she is a willing partaker, he is recalled by the sudden arrival of his mother to the necessity of proceeding on his way. The Giaour had promised to open to him the palace of subterranean fire, and to put him in possession of the treasures accumulated by the pre-Adamite Sultans. Both Carathis and Nouronibas are eager for these acquisitions, and he resumes his journey, accompanied by his bride. When they reach the hall of Eblis, the end of their journey, the description reaches a kind of Dantesque grandeur. Full of eager expectation, the new-comers pass through a great hall full of pale figures coming and going ceaselessly, taking no notice one of the other, and holding each his hand pressed upon his heart. This alarms them a little, but they are reassured by Eblis himself, who tells them that all the wealth in his dominions, and power indescribable over all the Genii, so that whatever they wish

will instantly be performed, are at their disposal. They are then led into an inner hall, where are the Sultans of the past, whose measureless riches they are about to enjoy. They are, however, appalled to find these potentates laid out in a terrible torpor upon biers of cedar wood, just sufficiently alive to feel their misery. The first and greatest among them is King Solomon, who, as the new-comers approach his bed, lifts up a solemn voice, and informs them of their sin and misery. When he concludes, he throws up his hands, one of which has been on his heart like all the rest, and the terrified spectators see his side transparent like crystal and his heart in flames.

"At this terrible sight Nouronibas fell as if petrified into the arms of Vathek. 'O Giaour!' said that unhappy prince, 'whither hast thou led us? Let us go from this place. I free thee from all thy promises. O Mahomet! is there no mercy for us?' 'No, there is no more mercy for you,' answered the pitiless Genius; 'know that this is the sojourn of despair and revenge. Thy heart shall burn like that of all the worshippers of Eblis: a few days are allowed thee before that fatal moment, use them as thou wilt; make thy bed of gold, command the infernal powers, survey these immense caverns at thy pleasure, no gate shall be closed before thee. As for me, I have fulfilled my mission.'"

The wretched lovers have, however, no inclination now to attempt to enjoy the pleasures for which they encountered their doom. They roam about the dismal place awaiting their fate in all the despair of anticipation. The only use Vathek makes of his power is to order the Genii, with vindictive rage, to bring his mother, the corrupter of his youth, that she

at least may share their torments. Carathis comes; and once more it is the spirit of modern humour which breaks into the gloomy tale. The inquisitive witch, greedy of power and knowledge and money, is not the least discomposed by the gloomy scene. The half-dead kings are nothing to her. She exerts her newly-acquired power at once, compels the Genius to show her all their treasures, snatches at all their charms and talismans, and, when the fatal moment comes, is struck by it in the midst of a crowd of obsequious spirits whose homage she has exacted.

These scenes are really powerful. They are far more striking than Southey's pyrotechnic horrors, and recall in the pale crowds, whose horrible indifference to everything but their own tortures makes of each one a hopeless solitary, something like the terrible hell of Dante. It is curious that the most luxurious dreamer of his time, the lavish, wealthy, self-indulging master of the only fairy palace of modern times, should have produced this one gloomy picture, in which there seems a subtle mockery of his own life as well as that of his hero—and should have done no more.

He did do more, however: he built a wonderful palace, Fonthill Abbey, close to the very handsome house which his wealthy father had built, but which the son demolished as not important enough for him. He made his new building into a palace of enchantment, the wonder of its day, filling it with everything that was gorgeous and costly. Annoyed by the intrusion of sportsmen on his grounds, he had a wall

of twelve feet high, extending to a distance of seven miles, built round his property. Within this enclosure hundreds of workmen laboured at the new palace, to which he gave, one does not know why, the name of Abbey. Sometimes when it pleased his caprice to hurry the work, it was continued by night, by torchlight. When the house was completed it was furnished in the same magnificent manner. "He deposited diamonds in a china cup," says the awed and admiring narrator of all these wonderful doings. Inside the seven miles of wall, nineteen hundred acres of ground afforded every variety of beautiful scenery, landscapes both soft and wild, space enough for every kind of recreation. The establishment included, besides a host of servants, a physician, a learned antiquary, who acted as secretary, and a musician of great accomplishment. Vathek himself had scarcely a combination of delights more stately and splendid than were included within. "The ladies," spoken of in bated breath, two daughters whom his young wife, dying after three years of marriage, had left to him, lived in a house in the park, with an establishment of their own, where their education was carried on as if they had been princesses. In this wonderful retirement Beckford lived for many years, until his fortune, which had been diminished by various losses, proved insufficient to keep up the vast expenditure which the house required. Instead of diminishing the expenditure, he sold the place. Perhaps by this time he had got tired of his vast plaything. But he immediately proceeded to make himself

another house, scarcely less splendid, though smaller than Fonthill, in Bath, where all his most cherished treasures were removed, and where he lived and died. A more strange episode was never worked out upon the sober web of literary history. Our space does not permit any account of the finery, the splendour and beautiful things with which he was surrounded. But this lover of the beautiful cast off his eldest daughter, who would not marry another millionaire as he wished, and left her to languish in poverty, while he transferred everything he had to give and to leave to her sister, who did her duty and married a duke of her father's choice.

Thomas Hope had, if not a breeding so luxurious as that of Beckford, at least, like him, the advantage or disadvantage of almost boundless fortune, and many similar tastes. He did not shut himself up in costly and fastidious seclusion, but he was one of the first to make an elaborate study of furniture and decoration, and his luxurious and splendid houses were part of himself and inseparable from his life. He was Dutch by origin, a merchant of Amsterdam, where the family still keep up their business connection. Eastern travel was perhaps, in those days, considering the much increased rate of travelling in general, more usual than now—the shores of the Levant having attractions besides those which occupy the tourist. Hope, no doubt, had unusual facilities for understanding the details of Oriental life, and his one tale is an elaborate exposition of Eastern society, of the Turks and the Greeks of that age when Turkey

was still an appreciable power, and Greece an unformed nation, oppressed and rebellious, acknowledged by nobody. The story of Anastasius is that of a rascally Greek, cunning, subtle, and treacherous, according to the conventional idea of his race. It is very long, very elaborate: the tale is delayed continually, to furnish us with details of the varied life of the court, the harems, the mercenaries, the suspicions and dangers amid which both rulers and favourites lived. It is a story of adventure and manners, rather than of character, since there is no one who attracts the reader's regard throughout, and the hero himself is an odious schemer, whose successes and misfortunes are equally far from attracting our sympathy. But the book had a success which we cannot see that it deserved, and has rescued its author from the oblivion, which even wealth has no spell against, at least, in so far as this, that everybody in his own generation had heard of it, and that even now a vague sense of identification comes to the public mind when any one, asking to what Hopes a well-known family belongs, is answered not by any technical designation or county title, but by the name of Anastasius, a curious distinction—so small, yet enough to outlive a great many more substantial things.

Another writer who flourished in the end of the century, a little preceding some of those here mentioned, has a special interest for us, not only for his own productions, but for the strange genius mixed with much alloy, but yet genius still—more remarkable than any other of his father's works—who has

descended to us from him. Isaac Disraeli was the son of a Jew, not of the merely moneyed kind, with which we are most familiar, but of those who boast a high European lineage, as well as the misty honours of Eastern centuries. The family, according to the account given by its last distinguished member, had gone from Spain to Venice in the fifteenth century, where it adopted, in gratitude for its escape from Torquemada and the Inquisition, the name of Disraeli, "a name never borne before or since by any other family." The father of Lord Beaconsfield sprang from a race of keen and successful merchants, but was himself most strangely unlike them, a dreamy recluse and student, breaking all the traditions of his family with such an obstinate if gentle and sentimental impracticability, that nothing was possible but to leave him to the pursuit of his studies and fancies. From his childhood he showed himself "doomed his father's soul to cross;" and his mother was a passionate and discontented personage, who had "imbibed a dislike for her race," and was "so mortified by her social position, that she lived until eighty without indulging in a tender expression"—a most uncomfortable parent. The young Isaac, after an unhappy childhood, drove his father frantic by "producing a poem," which seemed to the wealthy merchant to promise only beggary and ruin to his only child. "The unhappy poet was consigned like a bale of goods" to the correspondent of the firm at Amsterdam. When he returned at eighteen he was "a disciple of Rousseau, burning

to prove himself the most sentimental and tender of sons to the mother whose indifference he had probably forgotten. But when he would have flung himself upon her bosom, the lady "burst into derisive laughter," ridiculing at once himself and his appearance, which was eccentric and unusual. "Whereupon," says his son, "Emile, of course, went into heroics, wept, sobbed, and finally, shut up in his chamber, composed an impassioned epistle. My grandfather, to soothe him, dwelt on the united solicitude of his parents for his welfare, and broke to him their intention, if it was agreeable to him, to place him in the establishment of a great merchant at Bordeaux. My father replied that he had written a poem of considerable length which he wished to publish, against Commerce, which was the corruption of man!"

The impracticable youth, however, was not always persecuted: such parental severities can last only for a time, and though the gentle sufferer in this rich household was not over happy, yet by and by he emancipated himself. His first publication was some "polished and pointed" verses on the Abuse of Satire, aimed at the famous "Peter Pindar" Wolcot, then maintaining a free fight against all the powers that were. The "effusion" had such success as was possible, enough to fill the journals and startle the stern parents with their son's fame. Shortly after he made the acquaintance of young Samuel Rogers, then gaining his little reputation as a poet, and of "Mr. Pye"—a celebrity whom even the encyclopædias scorn, and

of whom we know nothing save that he was Poet-Laureate (!) before Southey took and vindicated the office. He was "a master of correct versification," Lord Beaconsfield says. Young Disraeli did not reach even so far as young Rogers on the soft little slopes of Parnassus, but he was led to the odd byway of literature in which he gained his reputation, by means of a residence in Exeter, which brought him into the literary circle then flourishing there. Here, as so often before, a new and gentle group of amateur writers opens upon us once more. Exeter, like Lichfield, was full of gentlemen who could all compose agreeable verses, the chief among them being Dr. Downman, "a poet and physician, and the best of men." The names of Hole and of Hayter say little to posterity, and of all the group the only well-known name is that of the composer Jackson, who was also, according to Lord Beaconsfield, "an author of high æsthetical speculation." "It was said," the same authority adds, "that the two principal if not sole organs of periodical criticism at that time, I think the *Critical Review* and the *Monthly Review*, were principally supported by Exeter contributions." It is not usual nowadays to find a little local school of letters in every country town, and society is no longer parcelled out into pieces, but hangs together from one centre in a way perhaps more complete but not so picturesque as of old; but it is curious to find starting up about us, as we pursue our investigations, another and another long-forgotten circle, all conscious of

excellence, and many perhaps looking for nothing less than immortality.

Isaac Disraeli was, as has been said, a poet to begin with, like so many of his compeers. The kind and good Sir Walter, with that capacious memory in which all kinds of strays and waifs found refuge, and with that genial desire to give everybody he met pleasure, which in him was never insincere, met the collector of literary curiosities years after, with the delightful compliment of "reciting a poem of half-a-dozen stanzas," which Disraeli had written in this early period. "Not altogether without agitation," says his biographer, "surprise was expressed that the lines should have been known, still more that they should have been remembered." "Ah!" said Sir Walter, "if the writer of these lines had gone on, he would have been an English poet."

This, however, whether he could or could not have attained it, was not to be. Chance directed him to the quiet byways of literature, in which he achieved a mild but complete success. The *Curiosities of Literature* is more interesting than many a book of higher pretensions, and some of Mr. Disraeli's essays were good and able: but, perhaps, had not his son arisen greater than he, we should have thought less of the father: and granting the interest of his chief publication, there is no sort of greatness in it, nor original power. The character of the man, however, as given by his son, affords us a very clear and concise sketch of the literary workman. "He had not a single passion or prejudice," says this

unquestionable authority. "He disliked business, and he never required relaxation. He rose to enter the chamber where he lived alone with his books, and at night his lamp was ever lit within the same walls. In London his only amusement was to ramble among booksellers. In the country he scarcely ever left his room but to saunter in abstraction upon a terrace, muse over a chapter, or coin a sentence." He had arrived at the mature age of forty-five "before his career as a great author influencing opinions really commenced." The reader at this distance will perhaps imagine, wonderingly, whether that career ever commenced at all. He lived to be a very old man, like so many of the subjects of this history. Great genius may exhaust and wear out, though chiefly when associated with great passions; but a little genius is a wonderfully safe and comfortable possession. It gives interest to life whatever may be its burdens, and cheers the weary years. Disraeli published some historical books, one of them an elaborate work on the *Life and Reign of Charles I.*, and various essays, one of which, the *Essay on Literary Character*, his son considers "the most perfect of his compositions," besides many shorter articles. But the work by which he will be known is the *Curiosities of Literature*, though it is neither the most ambitious nor the most serious of his productions.

It seems scarcely necessary to refer again to the two sisters, Sophia and Harriet Lee, who have been already named, the authors of the *Canterbury*

Tales, stories not important enough to have any national value, though they have lived longer than they had any particular right to do, and may still be found in old libraries: nor to good Mr. Bage near Tamworth, whom Godwin, about the time when he tried to persecute and argue Miss Harriet Lee into marrying him, went out of his way to see, asking, "Are not such men as much worth visiting as palaces, towns, and cathedrals?" Bage was born a miller, and was a well-to-do person with paper-mills, beside those that ground the grain. To "dissipate his melancholy" under some special trouble, he began to write novels; and afterwards, when he had formed the habit, went on producing them methodically one every two years, as children are born in well-regulated families. Where have all those children of the fancy gone? "Hermsprong," which Godwin reports to be "his sixth," very much indeed as if it had been a baby, is the one that is best known.

We will not turn back to Hannah More, though she was no older than several of the writers here described. She too, amid her band of maiden sisters, was still living and writing when the century began, and *Cœlebs in search of a Wife* was not published till 1805; but she was a woman of the Johnsonian age, with little opening in her to the promise of the new times to come.

Another gentle figure, however, which is altogether modern, came into the world in the end of the old century, in Liverpool; then a much less important and bustling place, with no such overwhelming rush

of trade and commercial activity as now, with its old church surveying the old quays and great river, lively and brisk with traffic although smoke and steam were absent. Felicia Hemans was all that the daintily cultivated flower of a wealthy merchant family is apt to be—over sweet, over refined, in natural contrast to the primitive vigour and stronger atmosphere of her birthplace. But she was not brought up among the traders in the wealthy town, under the shadow of the wings of Roscoe and his court, but in Wales, where her family retired after some mercantile catastrophe. She was Felicia Brown in those days, and the embodiment of a muse such as Gray or Collins would have drawn—"distinguished from her cradle by extreme beauty and precocious talents." At fifteen she had already published a volume of little poems, which some heartless critic handled roughly. "The young poetess was then . . . in the full glow of that radiant beauty which was destined to fade so early. The mantling bloom of her cheeks was shaded by a profusion of natural ringlets of a rich golden brown; and the ever-varying expression of her brilliant eyes gave a changeful play to her countenance, which would have made it impossible for any painter to do justice to it." Whoever the wretched being might have been that cut her pretty verses to pieces in his obscurity in 1808, who could now lay a hand upon this pretty creature? Her poems are like this description of herself. They are always sweet, liquid, and melodious: they mean as much as so soft and beautiful a nature ever requires to mean: "Sweet records, promises as sweet"—the gentle

sentiments that lie on the surface, subdued sorrows, chastened happiness. She married in her Welsh solitude a certain Captain Hemans, "by no means destitute of advantages, either of person or education," with whom her life was not happy—but who was so kind as to take himself away before things grew intolerable, leaving to her the undisturbed possession of her children, which was enough for happiness of a moderate kind. Her little biography is very reticent, but the glimpses it gives of the rural household, the boys and their mother, are very pretty and touching. The group of children, whose "heroine" is "mamma,"—one of whom sprang up from his Latin exercise, and shouted out, "Now I am sure mamma is a better poet than Lord Byron"—surround her with such a soft background of cherub faces as suits at once her pretty genius and her gentle personality. She wrote a great many poems which children will always willingly learn, and gentle souls admire—full of tenderness and soft pathos, and the purest sentiments. In the first half of the century she was the first love of the girls in poetry, as Scott was the first love of the boys. But by this time her works have faded like a bouquet of flowers. They continue to be printed (we think) in pretty editions, and sold—but it is with a smile that we hear of the great fame of Mrs. Hemans. She died young, and her little story is throughout most tender and touching. And her verses linger in the memories of people who are growing old, with echoes and fragrances in them of their own youth—but are gone out of mortal ken for any more important use.

About the same time, in Manchester, another poet of the same gentle kind, but who never reached to the same distinction, and whose name is scarcely remembered at all, lived and flourished. She was the friend of Wordsworth, and left an interesting reputation behind her, mingling to some degree in the literary activity of the time, writing critical articles and general literature, as well as now and then the sweetness of a little poem; while at the same time bringing up, as well as an elder sister could, a family of orphan children. Save for her connection with Wordsworth, and the similarity of her slight productions and position to those of Mrs. Hemans, it would be scarcely worth while to place the name of Maria Jewsbury on record at all. Her sister Geraldine took, at a much later period, a respectable rank as a novelist. Manchester does not seem to have had any pretension, like its neighbour town, to be a literary centre. Here is the only little glimpse of a taper which at that moment it seems to have possessed.

If we were to say that Bishop Heber was a sort of male twin to Mrs. Hemans, we fear that the comparison would be received with little favour by many readers. So few of the poets of the time accomplished all the rites of education, and trained themselves, as ancient tradition bade, on the classic models, that it is disappointing to find, in the rare instance of a fully-qualified academical poet, an example so little remarkable as this excellent and blameless soul. In the dearth of writers properly marked with the sign-manual of the Universities, it ought to be noted that Heber gained

the prize of poetry at Oxford, fulfilled all his studies there with distinction, and became a Fellow of All-Souls. So much for so little! But it has never ceased to be true that poets must be born, and cannot be made. He was the son of a clerical race: of a nature born to goodness and every excellence, with nothing wayward in him or irregular. His poems are the utterance of the most spotless of well-regulated minds and devout spirits. It is doubtful whether the best of poets ever produced anything more widely known and popular than the "Missionary Hymn" about "Greenland's icy mountains," or that which celebrates the Star in the East of the Epiphany. So that this mild singer had his reward of the most liberal kind in the affectionate enthusiasm with which the simple-hearted religious crowd regards the writers of its sacred songs. The kind of tranquil life he led, and the boundless correspondence which proceeded from his rectory, have been put before the world on various occasions. His letters were voluminous and fluent, and always, it need hardly be said, perfect in sentiment: but they have few literary attractions. He became Bishop of Calcutta in 1823, and addressed himself to his work there with great courage and faithfulness, dying of it in a very few years—an end which has given him, to many, something of the sanctity of a martyr.

Another poet of the same culture, and of more ambitious pretensions, was Dean Milman; like Heber, the author of a prize poem, and distinguished in his University: but not, unfortunately, born to a more

successful issue in this branch of attainment. When Heber had subsided into a country living, Milman was Professor of Poetry in Oxford, a post which ought to involve a crown of poetical honour not much below that of the Laureate; and he was perhaps the best poet living who had any right to a place within those academical precincts—which was not saying much. He made some very bold and ambitious ventures in the poetical drama, and succeeded so far as to have his tragedy of *Fazio* acted at Drury Lane. But the public did not sustain his claims to the name of poet, and he has fallen into the limbo of poetical writers, like those who "senza speme vivono in disio." His more important work, however, held a different place, and the man who is recognised as the historian of Latin Christianity does not need to break his heart over the failure of poetic fame.

In a still more humble obscurity, in distant spots in the country—in Bedfordshire, the *Farmer's Boy* Bloomfield; in Suffolk, the mild young Quaker poet, Bernard Barton; in hardheaded Yorkshire, the rude and fervent spirit—usually inspired with political themes, but sometimes dropping into unexpected strains of tenderness—of Ebenezer Elliot; in Lincolnshire, among the level fields, a village minstrel, John Clare, ploughboy and peasant—not much more than glowworms about the hedgerows, still kept a little flicker about of poetical light. The better part of Elliot's productions, the often stirring and effective strains which got him the name of the Corn Law Rhymer, were of a later date; but these softer chorus-

singers had all begun in the early morning of the century to swell the greater voices which had made of that new period a renowned and great poetic age.

In another branch of literature another most charming and feminine figure appears out of the rural shades, from the village scenery, which was her best inspiration, towards the end of the first quarter of the century, beyond which we do not pretend to go in this record. (Jane Austen, a greater competitor for fame, we reserve for a separate notice.) The name of Mary Russell Mitford is one which recalls to us many of the most delightful idyllic sketches in the language. The landscape clears round her, the village roofs ascend, the little town builds itself in the clear sunshiny atmosphere, where merit, sometimes depressed, is always happy in the end, and every wrong is righted and every mistake made clear. She was the daughter of a foolish prodigal, an attractive and dashing fine gentleman, a sort of man, fortunately, more common in novels than in life, who wasted his daughter's money and lived upon her affection, shutting her out from everything in life but his own service. She, always cheerful, tender, and patient, contentedly resigned comfort and tranquillity, as well as fortune and position, in order that he should have everything he wanted, and when their money was spent, worked for him with heroic devotion. The story would be a beautiful one if it were not too painful to see one life thus sacrificed to the caprices of another. Filial devotion is heavenly, but it rouses a sort of moral indignation when we see how its very

greatness is the occasion of developing unutterable meanness on the other side. This, however, is a view of self-sacrifice which it is very painful to be forced to take, and which, let us thank Heaven, is always an unpopular view. The world takes an unfailing pleasure in the spectacle of supreme and self-forgetting virtue, little as it may feel inclined to copy it. Miss Mitford did more for her father than to endow him with all her worldly goods, and when they were gone to labour for his living; she did all that in her lay with every wile of her delightful power, and all the special pleading of affection, to represent him to us as the hero which he would seem to have remained to her—the best, most benign and gracious of mankind. She was eminently well connected, taking the Russell in her name from the house of Bedford, and thus vanquished the sorest infliction of poverty, the slights and scorns of social life. Her stories and her autobiographical ramblings convey to us many glimpses of her youth, which, notwithstanding many ups and downs of fortune, had evidently no small amount of brightness in it. But her outset upon her literary career was after a far more ambitious sort than her after successes. The smiling girl, whose pretty experiences among her kindred and the rural gentry whom she sketches so happily were all of the simplest and most artless kind, and who had already cares about the butcher and the baker, though she had seen her father run through more than one fortune, suddenly stepped forth upon the world with no less a production than a tragedy, which was played upon the big stage of Drury Lane

in 1823, and covered the young woman with glory. Perhaps, by the way, she was no longer a girl when this startling success took place; but she was one of those who are always young, and the predominance of her father in her story keeps her in the position of youth. Her *Julian*, like so many other plays which at the moment secure everything that critics and listeners can say of applause and admiration, died soon after, and has never reappeared on the stage. *Rienzi* was also acted, and met with similar good fortune. They are perfectly readable now, with much pretty verse and many fine situations; but nobody thinks of reading them, nor has any theatre attempted to produce them on the stage. It is almost a commonplace to say this: it would seem to be the ordinary fate of poetical dramas of average merit, without either great genius or a powerful hold upon the intricacies of stage business.

These productions were like meteors blazing and falling. The real fame of the author rests upon a very different foundation. Whether she was cast down by the very temporary character of her first reputation, we are not told; she was at all times so reasonable, so sweet-tempered, and so ready to do what her hand found to do, that, even had she been so, it is not likely she would have made much show of her feelings. But it was after this temporary glory was over—when it was forced upon her that she was not as Shakspeare, but rather as Joanna Baillie, as Barry Cornwall—as Coleridge, ever so much greater than either—had been, a dramatist of the moment,

without power to lay hold upon the public, or any real ascendency over its imagination—that she turned to the humble everyday scenes about her, the simple stories of the hamlet, the changes and chances that befell her humble neighbours, the strain of common life. Nothing more pleasant, more touching, more fresh and odorous of the fields and farms, could be—or more true to English life and country manners. *Our Village* became as well known to the English-speaking world in a year or two as if that collection of cottages in leafy Berkshire had been one of the centres of the world. And these delightful little pictures are still as fresh, as lifelike as ever, scarcely even old-fashioned, though there are no modern appliances in them, no telegraphs or railways, but long anxieties and waiting and patience, which, perhaps, for the poet's and the story-teller's art, are better things. Miss Mitford can scarcely be said to be a creator; but no one has clearly annexed and brought in to the realm of literature a more real piece of English soil.

JOANNA BAILLIE, born 1762; died 1851.

Published Plays on the Passions (1st volume), 1798.
" " (2d "), 1802.
" " (3d "), 1812.
Miscellaneous Dramas, 1804.
Family Legend, 1810.
Fugitive Verses, 1823.
Dramas, 1836.

ANNA LETITIA BARBAULD, born 1743; died 1825.

Published Poems, 1773.
Devotional Poems, 1773.

Published Poems, 1773.
Hymns in Prose, 1775.
Early Lessons, 1775.
Ode to the Year, 1811.

She assisted in the composition of "Evenings at Home," and edited various publications, especially a collection of British Novelists, with critical and biographical notices, published in 1810.

WILLIAM ROSCOE, born 1753; died 1831.
Published Life of Lorenzo de Medici, 1796.
Life and Pontificate of Leo X., 1805.

JOHN FOSTER, born 1770; died 1843.
Published Essays, 1805.
On the Evils of Popular Ignorance, 1819.
Contributions to the Eclectic Review.

JANE TAYLOR, born 1783; died 1824.
ANNE TAYLOR, born 1782; died 1866.
Published Original Poems for Infant Minds, 1803.
Rhymes for the Nursery, 1806.
Essays in Rhyme, 1816.
Contributions of J. J. (Jane Taylor).

ISAAC TAYLOR, born 1787; died 1865.
Published Elements of Thought, 1822.
History of the Transmission of Ancient Books, 1825.
Process of Historical Proof, 1826.
Natural History of Enthusiasm, 1829.

JAMES MONTGOMERY, born 1771; died 1854.
Published Wanderer of Switzerland, and other Poems, 1806.
The West Indies, 1807.
Prison Amusements.
The World Before the Flood, 1813.
Thoughts on Wheels, 1817.
Greenland, 1819.
The Pelican Island, 1827.
He was Editor of the Sheffield "Iris" for many years.

WILLIAM COBBETT, born 1762; died 1835.

Published Parliamentary History of England, 1806 to 1820.
Life of W. Cobbett, by himself, 1809.
A Year's Residence in the United States, 1818.
Cottage Economy, 1822.
Poor Man's Friend, 1826.
Emigrant's Guide, 1829.
Rural Rides, 1830.
Along with numerous other pamphlets, political and otherwise.

WILLIAM BECKFORD, born 1760; died 1844.

Published Memoirs of Extraordinary Painters, 1780.
Vathek, 1782.
And some other works of no importance.

THOMAS HOPE, born 1770; died 1831.

Published Anastasius, 1819.
And several works on Architecture and the Arts of Decoration.

ISAAC DISRAELI, born 1766; died 1848.

Published Curiosities of Literature (1st volume), 1791.
" " (2d "), 1792.
" " (3d "), 1817.
" " Second series, 1823.
Calamities of Authors, 1812.
Quarrels of Authors, 1814.
Literary and Political Character of James I., 1816.
Commentaries on Life and Reign of Charles I., 1828.
Griot, Hampden, and Pym, 1832.
The Amenities of Literature, 1841.

FELICIA HEMANS, born 1793; died 1835.

Published Early Poems, 1808.
The Domestic Affections, 1812.
Meeting of Wallace and Bruce, 1819.
The Sceptic, 1820.
Dartmoor, 1821.
Vespers of Palermo, 1823.
Siege of Valencia, 1823.
The Forest Sanctuary, 1826.
Records of Woman, 1828.
National Lyrics, etc., 1828.
Songs of the Affections, 1830
Hymns for Childhood, 1834.
Scenes and Hymns of Life, 1834.
Thoughts during Sickness.
Poetical Remains published with Memoir after her death, 1836.

REGINALD HEBER, born 1783; died 1826.

Published (Prize Poem) Palestine, 1803.
Europe; or, Lines on the Present War, 1809.
Narrative of a Journey through the Upper Provinces of India (posthumous).

HENRY HART MILMAN, born 1791; died 1868.

Published Fazio, 1817.
The Fall of Jerusalem, 1820.
Belshazzar, 1822.
The Martyr of Antioch, 1822.
Anne Boleyn, 1826.
Samor, 1818.
History of Jews, History of Latin Christianity (see The Historians, vol. iii.)

BERNARD BARTON, born 1784; died 1849.

Published Poems, 1820

EBENEZER ELLIOT, born 1781; died 1849.

JOHN CLARE, born 1793; died 1864.

Published Poems—Morning Walk, Evening Walk etc., 1821
Poems descriptive of Rural Life and Scenery, 18
Village Minstrel, 1821.

ROBERT BLOOMFIELD, born 1766; died 1823.

Published Farmer's Boy, 1798.
Rural Tales, 1810.

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